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Screen

Vertigo and cinephilic pilgrimage

A century of electronic cinema

Spectacle/gender/history in *Gone with the Wind*

Lawrence Alloway's pop art film criticism

Experimental feminist film dossier

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49:2 Summer 2008

DOUGLAS CUNNINGHAM: 'It's all there, it's no dream': *Vertigo* and the redemptive pleasures of the cinephilic pilgrimage **123**

WILLIAM BODDY: A century of electronic cinema **142**

TOM BROWN: Spectacle/gender/history: the case of *Gone with the Wind* **157**

PETER STANFIELD: Maximum movies: Lawrence Alloway's pop art film criticism **179**

issue editor
John Caughie

Experimental feminist film dossier

SOPHIE MAYER: Expanding the frame: Sally Potter's digital histories and archival futures **194**

MAEVE CONNOLLY: Of other worlds: nature and the supernatural in the moving image installations of Jaki Irvine **203**

SARAH SMITH: *Lip* and *Love*: subversive repetition in the pastiche films of Tracey Moffatt **209**

SARAH NEELY: Stalking the image: Margaret Tait and intimate filmmaking practices **216**

reviews

RICHARD RUSHTON: Daniel Frampton, *Filmosophy*; Todd McGowan, *The Real Gaze: Film Theory After Lacan* **222**

ALASTAIR PHILLIPS: Hye Seung Chung, *Hollywood Asian: Philip Ahn and the Politics of Cross-Ethnic Performance*; Daisuke Miyao, *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom* **228**

EMMA WILSON: Andrea Sabbadini (ed.), *Projected Shadows: Psychoanalytic Reflections on the Representation of Loss in European Cinema* **234**

YINGJIN ZHANG: Yingchi Chu, *Chinese Documentaries: from Dogma to Polyphony*; Gary G. Xu, *Sinascape: Contemporary Chinese Cinema* **237**

GAYE W. ORTIZ: Melanie Wright, *Religion and Film*; Eric S. Christianson, Peter Francis and William R. Telford (eds), *Cinéma Divinité* **242**

SU HOLMES: Annette Hill, *Restyling Factual TV: Audiences and News, Documentary and Reality Genres* **246**

DAVID BUTLER: Helen Wheatley, *Gothic Television* **250**

cover illustration
California Historical Landmark No. 327, San Francisco. Picture courtesy Douglas Cunningham

'It's all there, it's no dream': *Vertigo* and the redemptive pleasures of the cinephilic pilgrimage

DOUGLAS CUNNINGHAM

On some level, it was exactly what we had wanted all along: a way to drop into the film, just for a bit. And this is the last safe moment, the last protected place. Time and the tour are running out.[1]

Obviously, this text is addressed to those who know Vertigo *by heart. But do those who don't deserve anything at all?*[2]

'Only one is a wanderer', Madeleine tells Scottie. 'Two together are always going somewhere.' Scottie's reply is immediate, yet hesitantly spoken. 'No,' he warns, a tone of caution in his voice, 'I don't think that's necessarily true.' Nevertheless, the two decide to wander together through the sights and sounds of San Francisco's colonial history, their journey an attempt to connect with a mysterious past beyond the structures of space and time. In truth, their search is not unlike that of the many cinephiles who, during pilgrimages to San Francisco, merge with the mnemic traces of *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958) resting thick as fog in the city's unconscious. Like Scottie and Madeleine, these pilgrims search for personal, subjective spaces within an ephemeral, metaphysical narrative. They seek Kracauer's 'psychophysical correspondences', those 'fluid interrelations between the physical world and the psychological dimension in the broadest sense of the word'.[3]

Whether searching alone or in pairs, these pilgrims can never, as Madeleine asserts, reach a specific, final destination, for the true cinephilic pilgrimage is always necessarily a 'wandering', a hopeful meshing of spectatorial, personal, geographic and cultural memory with

1 Michael Goodwin and Lynda Myles Michael Goodwin and Lynda Miles, 'Alfred Hitchcock's San Francisco', San Francisco Magazine (July 1982), pp. 50–57.

2 Chris Marker Chris Marker, 'A free replay (notes on Vertigo)', in John Boorman and Walter Donohue (eds), Projections 4 1/2: Filmmakers on Filmmaking (in association with Positif) (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), pp. 123–30.

3 Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: the Redemption of Physical Reality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 68–9.

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Fig. 1. California Historical Landmark No. 327, San Francisco. Author's photo.

filmic indexicality and affect.[4] A pilgrimage is, after all, a journey to a revered place, but its ultimate destination is an intangible, spiritual one. Religion typically inspires the most well-known pilgrimages (Muslims to Mecca, Jews to the Weeping Wall in Jerusalem, Hindus to the Ganges, Catholics to the shrines of the Virgin Mary at Fatima, Knock, Lourdes, and so on), but recent scholarship has broadened the definition of these undertakings, roping in events as disparate as treks to sci-fi conventions and Harley-Davidson veteran excursions to the Vietnam War Memorial.[5] The well-trodden landmarks and geographies (in *Vertigo*, the Golden Gate Bridge and Fort Point, the Mission Dolores (figure 1), 900 Lombard Street, the Mission San Juan Bautista, et al.) serve merely as springboards for a potentially much larger phenomenological – even spiritual – experience. For this reason, cinephilic pilgrimages stand apart from the casual ogling of curious film buffs; after all, the cinephilic pilgrimage is born of love (for the diegetic world of the film), loss (the apparent absence of that diegetic world within the realm of the real) and a longing to occupy/influence a space–time somewhere between the index and its referent.

So what, then is a cinephilic pilgrimage? Recent work on cinephilia and *Vertigo* itself provides some clues, but a working definition of cinephilia itself might prove a better starting point. In his essay, 'Cinephilia, or the uses of disenchantment', Thomas Elsaesser effectively explicates an existing definition of this phenomenon:

> Cinephilia, strictly speaking, is love of cinema: 'a way of watching films, speaking about them and then diffusing this discourse', as Antoine de Baecque, somewhat primly, has defined it. De Baecque judiciously includes the element of shared experience, as well as the need to write about it and to proselytize, alongside the pleasure derived from viewing films on the big screen.[6]

As Elsaesser does later in the same essay, Paul Willemen provides a definition rooted in an ideological history when discussing cinephilia:

4 Ibid., p. 72.

5 Richard Barber, *Pilgrimage* (Suffolk: St Edmundsbury Press, 1991), pp. 1–6. See also Jill Dubish and Michael Winkelman, *Pilgrimage and Healing* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2005).

6 Thomas Elsaesser, 'Cinephilia or the uses of disenchantment', in Marijke de Valck and Malte Hagener (eds), *Cinephilia: Movies, Love and Memory* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), pp. 28–9.

> I would say that cinephilia describes a relationship to cinema that is still uncontaminated by a relationship to television although it was constructed within a period when television became a cultural presence. . . . With hindsight, that historical period can be seen to relate to that moment of transition until the late 60s when there was a massive focus on the so-called 'mediatic society', involving the need to take account of the daily and political impact of the mediatic environment in relation to which our thoughts are formed.[7]

Elsaesser, too, cherishes this same uncontaminated period, 'cinephilia take one', which, he argues, 'was identified with the means of holding its object in place, with the uniqueness of the moment, as well as with the singularity of sacred space' of the movie theatre. Of course, as Elsaesser asserts, a 'second-generation cinephilia' or 'cinephilia take two' has emerged since the rupture to 'cinephilia take one' brought about by the advent of ideological theory (also known as *Screen* theory) during the 1970s. This new, technology-savvy cinephilia, he says, is necessarily 'fetishistic', 'fragmented' and 'fractal', given the intense saturation of images facilitated by new forms of media and the changes they have wrought on viewing patterns.

> Against 'trepidation in anticipation' (take one), the agitation of cinephilia take two might best be described by the terms 'stressed/distressed', having to live in a non-linear, non-directional 'too much/all at once' state of permanent tension, not so much about missing the unique moment, but almost its opposite, namely about how to cope with a flow that knows no privileged points of capture at all and yet seeks that special sense of self-presence that love promises and sometimes provides.[8]

As we shall see, this essay emphasizes (perhaps naively) certain aspects of Elsaesser's and Willemen's thoughts while disregarding others. Whilst I am sensitive to the changes wrought to the cinephile's experience as a result of theoretical and technological change, I am more concerned here with the essential 'love of cinema' and the 'diffusion of discourse' of which Elsaesser writes, the essential phenomenological experience of the moving image (which, I will admit, differs significantly on the film screen and any given form of small screen – I have experienced *Vertigo* both ways and have found myself greatly surprised by how a theatre audience's reaction to certain scenes in *Vertigo* contrasts with my personal reaction while viewing the film on VHS or DVD). Theorists such as Anne Friedberg cover the implications of such technological changes to the frame more effectively than I can here.[9] Rather, my intent is to use the cinephilic experience as a springboard to address larger ontological and phenomenological concerns, particularly those relating to the chasm between imagined experience and lived experience. As Proust claims, 'We try to discover in things, which become precious to us . . . the reflection of what our soul has projected on

7 Paul Willemen, *Looks and Frictions: Essays in Cultural Studies and Film Theory* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 228.

8 Elsaesser, 'Cinephilia', pp. 36–7.

9 Anne Friedberg, *The Virtual Window: from Alberti to Microsoft* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).

to them; we are disillusioned when we find that they are in reality devoid of the charm which they owed, in our minds, to the association of certain ideas'.[10] I hope, then, to consider the reflection of what my soul has projected onto *Vertigo*'s pro-filmic sites, the disillusionment engendered by the realities of those places, and useful strategies for overcoming that disillusionment. In this regard, other works on cinephilia and *Vertigo* have assisted me. Christian Keathley's detailed historiographic discussion of cinephilia and its attachment to 'cinephiliac moments' in *Cinephilia and History, or the Wind in the Trees* has proved useful as a way of rethinking the spectator's emotional and physiological relationships to the screen image; likewise, Dan Auiler's *Vertigo: the Making of a Hitchcock Classic* and Jeff Kraft and Aaron Leventhal's *Footsteps in the Fog: Alfred Hitchcock's San Francisco* have contributed much to our historical understandings of the actual sites used in Hitchcock's film and how to find them.[11] Much, too, is owed to filmmaker Chris Marker, whose thoughtful commentary to his own filmed pilgrimage to the *Vertigo* sites in *Sans Soleil* (1983) informs much that I write here.

In many ways, however, *Vertigo* itself best defines the cinephilic pilgrimage: this phenomenon resembles Madeleine's purported visits to Golden Gate Park's 'Portals of the Past', mentioned by Elster (the true Madeleine's husband, who, we shall discover, covets the 'power and freedom' her family's wealth will provide him after his wife's death) as a site of her psychic transformation to – and/or possession by – the film's avatar of the former *Alta California*, Carlotta Valdes. During these visits, Elster claims, Madeleine allegedly connects with a colonial-era narrative by staring across Lloyd Lake at (through?) the pillars 'on the far side' (the pillars here representing a long-past era of even greater power and freedom among San Francisco's elite, for they are actually the only remnants of the A.N. Towne mansion on Nob Hill to have survived the 1906 earthquake).[12] Indeed, Elster's entire murder scheme and its associated alibis depend almost exclusively on Scottie's desire to solve a puzzle of ephemeral history encoded within monuments, missions, markers and the histories they represent ('If I could just find the key, the beginning, and put it together!').[13] Even the film's third and most influential screenwriter, Samuel Taylor (a native San Franciscan), acknowledges in a letter to Chris Marker that, 'I rewrote the script at the same time that I explored San Francisco and recaptured my past.'[14] Marker, in turn, notes that these words 'could apply as much to the characters as to the author'.[15]

Similarly, in their pilgrimages, cinephiles attempt to reify (that is, to ground within the real) an inherently ephemeral experience of the past, while simultaneously utilizing real spaces as 'portals' through which to once again access, personally experience, and even occupy, the past. However, just as Scottie learns that Judy can never match the Madeleine of his memory ('It's too late, there's no bringing her back!'), cinephilic pilgrims soon discover that the real cannot live up to the image. The

10 Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time, Volume I: Swann's Way* (New York, NY: The Modern Library, 2003), p. 119.

11 Christian Keathley, *Cinephilia and History, or the Wind in the Trees* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006); Dan Auiler, *Vertigo: the Making of a Hitchcock Classic* (New York, NY: St Martin's Press, 1998); Jeff Kraft and Aaron Leventhal, *Footsteps in the Fog: Alfred Hitchcock's San Francisco* (Santa Monica, CA: Santa Monica Press, 2002).

12 Kraft and Leventhal, *Footsteps in the Fog, p. 84.*

13 Robert J. Corber discusses how Scottie's inability to recognize the repressed racial and bohemian histories of San Francisco contribute to the tragedy that ensues in the film. See Robert J. Corber, *In the Name of National Security: Hitchcock, Homophobia, and the Political Construction of Gender in Postwar America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 154–84. See also Stanley Orr's and Martin Kevorkian's unpublished paper '*Vertigo*, empire, and the California mission revival', presented at the Hitchcock Centennial Conference, New York, 1999.

14 Quoted in Marker, 'A free replay (notes on *Vertigo*)', p. 128.

15 Ibid., pp. 128–9.

'Spiral of Time' (as mentioned by Marker in *Sans Soleil*), urban erasure, lack of affective context and lack of framing all contribute to the inadequacy of the real in the face of expectations derived from cinematic memory. In order to occupy and control the space of possibility and meaning, then, the cinephilic pilgrim must exercise his/her own creative agency; only then can the cinephile redeem both the real and the image.

I begin with a personal anecdote, one which will, I hope, illustrate the power affect wields over the most personal of cinephilic experiences. I first watched *Vertigo* on a rented RCA/Universal VHS videocassette. I did not like it; the ending seemed abrupt, the plot ill conceived and overdetermined. I could not relate, and hence I could not understand; I was eighteen, and although I liked Hitchcock I was at the time more enthralled with the smooth masculinities of Cary Grant's John Robie in *To Catch a Thief* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954) than with the subtle complexities of a film like *Vertigo*. A few years later, however, I met a fellow college student whose deep critical interest in Hitchcock (coupled with my unrequited romantic interest) inspired me to watch the film again. I bought a copy of *Vertigo*; the RCA/Universal VHS video box was pale blue, and on the front it featured a picture of James Stewart hanging from a rain gutter high over the city (I own it to this day, too sentimental to get rid of it). I cut the plastic around the bottom of the box, removed the cassette, and secured the remaining plastic to the inside of the box with Scotch tape. I put the videocassette into my VCR. The spirals emerged from the eye. I watched *Vertigo* again. Everything – in the film, in my life – suddenly made sense.

I tell this story not because I like sharing details about my personal life; rather, I seek to demonstrate the extent to which cinephilia is an individual, *lived* phenomenon with roots extending beyond the cinematic experience and into personal memory. *Vertigo* gained more personal and, later, intellectual meaning for me as a result of a painful romantic encounter I mapped onto the narrative during a second viewing of the film. One could assume, then, that my many pilgrimages to *Vertigo*'s sites had a healing aspect to them, much in the way that Greek pilgrims sought healings at the temples of Asklepios circa 500 BCE.[16] Yet the nature of my pilgrimages proved much different from this rather crude psychoanalytic reading. I can say that at some point, soon after my second viewing of the film, a transference, of sorts, took place, wherein my pilgrimages to 900 Lombard Street, the Mission San Juan Bautista, Fort Point, and so on, no longer brought to mind my failed romance but, rather, the film itself and the emotions I have experienced while watching it. The cinematic has somehow replaced the real as the object of originary affect, such that now, when I stand in the cemetery of the Mission Dolores, I seek for the moment of *jouissance* – the moment of genuine, personal meaning – I experienced when watching the film a second time. My desire to physically occupy this moment, in a space and time under my own control (a desire Marker notes in *Sans Soleil* as present in Scottie

16 Barber, *Pilgrimage*, p. 3.

in *Vertigo*'s second half), has eclipsed the original, real romantic angst that inspired my re-viewing of the film in the first place.

How can this be? After all, a spectator's cinematic experience is, by its very nature, a longing to connect with the real. No matter how cloaked within fantastical narrative, tricks of the camera or even digital manipulation, the spectator yearns to discover what only the camera can reveal: significant detail, unnoticed beauty, overlooked wonders of banality. 'The Indeterminate', as Kracauer labels such things, 'are surrounded with a fringe of meanings liable to touch off various moods, emotions, runs of inarticulate thoughts; in other words, they have a theoretically unlimited number of psychological and mental correspondences'.[17] These objects derive multiplicities of meaning not from any inherent qualities they possess in and of themselves, nor even from the camera's framing of the object; rather, the meanings stem from psychophysical correspondences, associative metaphysical phenomena achieved through the unique symbiotic relationship between the physical objects themselves (the indeterminate details as captured by the camera – the profilmic event) and the psyche (read: 'memories') of the spectator.[18] Proustian to the core, Kracauer asserts, these psychophysical correspondences trigger the release of vast memory reserves, resulting in overwhelming mental spatiotemporal shifts that reposition the spectator within 'a dimension which borders on [the] physical universe and is still intimately connected with it'.[19] Scottie experiences something very similar when kissing Judy/Madeleine in the apartment at the Empire Hotel.

17 Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, pp. 68–9.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid., p. 69.

Kracauer sees in these correspondences the potential for spectators to individually recognize – and validate with meaning – the indeterminate, 'dormant' world:

> Film renders visible what we did not, or perhaps even could not, see before its advent. It effectively assists us in discovering the material world with its psychophysical correspondences. We literally redeem this world from its dormant state, its state of virtual nonexistence, by endeavoring to experience it through the camera. The cinema can be defined as a medium particularly equipped to promote the redemption of physical reality. Its imagery permits us, for the first time, to take away with us the objects and occurrences that comprise the flow of material life.[20]

20 Ibid., p. 300.

And yet, at its most effective, this redemption of physical reality – its rescue from invisibility – necessarily haunts the spectator's later perceptions of that material world. This haunting occurs in part because the human eye, with its three-dimensional, peripheral and 'beyond-the-panoramic' perceptions of both breadth and depth, can only fail in its attempts to *re*-replicate the two-dimensional framed vistas and/or details the camera sought initially to replicate. Such a re-replication requires the intervention, once again, of an 'optical crutch', as it were – a camera, a telescope, or some such. Ironically, then, while the replication of the

real requires what Bazin calls the 'instrumentality of a nonliving agent' to intervene 'between the originating object and its reproduction', the re-replication of that real, in all its specificity and exactitude, requires the same instrumentality to achieve an approximation of *aperta finestra*.[21] Further complicating this haunting, however, is an absence of affect that is always already inherent in the diegetic narrative within the context of the cinematic experience. No visit to Fort Point, for example, can ever recreate the affect of Madeleine dropping nosegay petals into San Francisco Bay while Scottie watches longingly from a short distance (figure 2), for the dramatic context of the narrative and the profilmic tools and processes (the editing, the music, the soft-focus filters, the film stock, the aforementioned framing, and so on) have already mummified (to use Bazin's term) these moving moments (figure 3).[22] Short of striking another print from the negative of the originary profilmic experience, these efforts can never be recreated in all their detail and affect. Works from photographer Cindy Bernard's 'Ask the Dust' series (1989–92) confirm this point, particularly the fifth entry in the series, 'Ask the Dust: *Vertigo* (1958/1990)' (figure 3), primarily because they frame these locales outside of cinematic context, external to cinematic affect. 'In the series,' Dan Auiler states, 'Bernard revisited a group of famous film locations to shoot pictures using the same lenses and camera positions as

21 André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?*, Volume I, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), pp. 9–16.

22 Ibid.

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Fig. 2. The inimitable image: Madeleine at Fort Point in *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958). By kind permission of Universal Pictures.

Fig. 3. Cindy Bernard's 'Ask the Dust: *Vertigo* (1958/1990)'. By kind permission of the photographer.

the original films. The results are haunting – the locations are captured not as we know them [from the films], but like ghost landscapes, without actors or the context of a theater to animate them.'[23] Mark Durden agrees:

> Bernard's 'Ask the Dust' series begins with representation but returns us to the 'real' of specific locations. Films trigger a quest and a return to an origin on the part of the photographer. But the point seems to be that the real site is unattainable. When viewed by the spectator, Bernard's pictures are seen 'through' the filter of filmic memories and associations.[24]

In other words, the real proves unequal to the task of real-izing its own mediated potential; as a result, the spectator forms an ambivalent relation to the real. He/she longs for the real (Bazin calls this need 'obsessive'), but only to the extent that it meets the standards of affect already established by the cinematic experience.[25]

Bernard's photos are mere signs of an implied reality, as are the films she cites; and if the real site is unattainable, as Durden suggests, then that is only because our identification of the real site is dis/misplaced onto a fiction, yet one more aspect of the ambivalent relation to the real. Kracauer argues that,

> cinematic films evoke a reality more inclusive than the one they actually picture. They point beyond the physical world to the extent that the shots or combinations of shots from which they are built carry multiple meanings. Due to the continuous influx of the psychological correspondences thus aroused, they suggest a reality which may fittingly be called 'life'.[26]

The reality thus implied is, therefore, an inference of 'life' on the part of the spectator; that is, the spectator takes as 'life' the very product of the image meshed with his/her own memories. 'This term ['life'] as used here,' Kracauer continues, 'denotes a kind of life which is still intimately connected, as if by an umbilical cord, with the material phenomena from which its emotional and intellectual contents emerge.'[27] By 'material phenomena', Kracauer means not only the original profilmic event (Hitchcock and crew filming Kim Novak at the Golden Gate Bridge), but also the individual reserves of memory within the spectator that provide the associative basis for the affect achieved by Madeleine dropping nosegay petals into San Francisco Bay. Kracauer states, too, that the implied 'more inclusive' reality evoked by films maintains umbilical connections (figure 4) with these same 'material phenomena'.[28] This umbilicus is not unlike Bazin's use of the 'death mask' metaphor to describe the connection between an index and its referent; as Keathley explains, 'the indexical quality of a film image is the mark or trace of a prior presence, and this presence can suddenly and unexpectedly make itself felt to the viewer'.[29] In Kracauer's example, however, the 'prior presence' refers not simply to a single referent (the profilmic event), but

23 Auiler, *Vertigo: the Making of a Hitchcock Classic*, pp. 184–5.

24 Excerpt from exhibition catalogue: Mark Durden, 'Screen memories: Cindy Bernard' (London: James Hockey Gallery/Viewpoint Gallery, 1995). Excerpt available as a downloadable file at URL: http://www.sound2cb.com/atdtrilogy/ [accessed 31 March 2008].

25 Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, p. 12.

26 Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, p. 71.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Keathley, *Cinephilia and History*, pp. 37–8.

rather to two separate material phenomena, one of which (individual memory) involves the spectator in a productive way even before the images on screen take on any specific meaning (a formulation at which Bazin, Kracauer's French contemporary, would ultimately arrive).[30] The umbilicus, in turn, serves as a two-way conduit to/from the space (represented in figure 4 by the circle) in which the fusion of these material phenomena takes place: this is the space of psychophysical correspondence, the space where meaning comes into being just prior to the suggestion of 'life' on screen. This, then, is the space the spectator desires to occupy; it is the point at which he/she engages with the film in a writerly way (of course, this writerly process is also necessarily limited due to the unconscious nature of that spectator's engagement with the film).[31]

And yet, the spectator cannot occupy this space during the cinematic experience – at least, not for long. The space of psychophysical correspondence is fleeting, ephemeral, changing second by second, in concert with the film's constant change from frame to frame. For while critics such as Kracauer, Bazin and others celebrate cinema for its ability to preserve lost time, film is, nevertheless, still subject to its intangible, two-dimensional, non-real status. Granted, as Balázs claims, 'Hollywood invented an art which disregards the principle of self-contained composition and not only does away with the distance between the spectator and the work of art but deliberately creates the *illusion* in the spectator that he is in the middle of the action reproduced in the fictional space of the film'.[32] Indeed, we do engage with film psychically (and perhaps even physiognomically) for a specified period, we remember and treasure its most affective moments, but we cannot 'live' it in the most reductive, crude sense of that word. The cinema, even at its most powerful, can only seduce, dazzle, inspire a suspension of disbelief and affect us emotionally in the most profound ways. However much these capabilities contribute to quality of life, they can never empower film to be life itself. The cinephile, however, wants to negate this truth; he/she wants to overcome the indexical barriers; to don Bazin's death mask and, in so doing, resurrect and then become the dead person (now living).

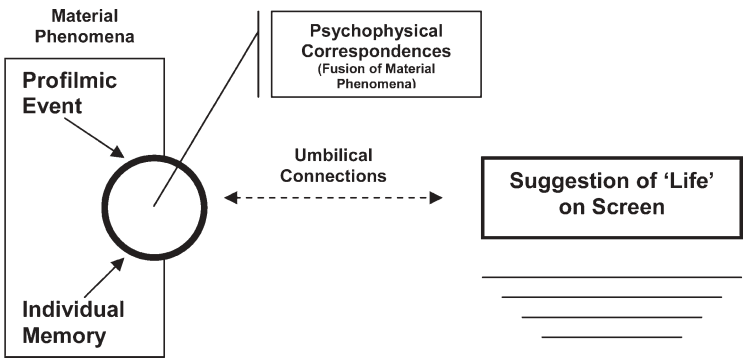

Fig. 4. Kracauer's psychophysical correspondences at work.

30 André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?* Volume II, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), pp. 16–40.

31 Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1974).

32 Béla Balázs, *Theory of the Film: Character and Growth of a New Art*, trans. Edith Bone (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1970), p. 50 [emphasis mine].

Marker's alter ego, Sandor Krasna, writes of Scottie's similar desire during the *Vertigo* pilgrimage section of *Sans Soleil*; in his letters to an unknown woman (another homage by Marker?), Krasna states that Scottie, 'finding it impossible to live with memory without falsifying it, invented a double of Madeleine in another dimension of time, a zone that would belong only to him, and from which he could decipher the indecipherable story that had begun at Golden Gate when he pulled Madeleine out of San Francisco Bay. . .'. Like Scottie's desire for a zone in which he alone controls the courses of space and time, the cinephile wants to freeze in time – and explore – the moment at which the worlds of memory and film converge to create meaning; in short, he/she wants to step into the film with memory intact.

Balázs best captures the essence of this desire by relating two Chinese stories. In the first of these (which Walter Benjamin also references), an artist literally steps into the landscape he has just painted ('He entered the picture and followed the path towards the mountains and was never seen again by any man').[33] In the second, a man 'saw a beautiful picture of lovely maidens disporting themselves in a meadow full of flowers'. Falling in love with one of these, 'he entered the picture and took the maiden for his wife. A year later, a little child appeared in the picture.'[34] Balázs's primary interests in these stories are their expression of a desire to transcend the self-contained composition of a work and the abilities of their respective protagonists to imagine a world beyond the borders of the frame. Both points are important. However, of immediate interest in these stories (a point Balázs seems to ignore) are the differing ways in which a creative act (one artistic, the other reproductive) relates to a (meta)physical act (the act of stepping into the work of art). Whereas in the first story, the artist creates and then steps into the painting, in the second, a spectator first steps into the painting and only then (pro)creates – that is, this latter spectator's leap of faith yields both a physical result within the diegetic world of the painting (a child) and an artistic result (the *image* of the child, now visible to nondiegetic observers). The actions of both protagonists are writerly, but only the actions of the latter protagonist yield a second creative act, and this by someone not involved in the initial act of creation. Keathley, in concurrence with de Baecque and Frémaux, highlights the importance of such creative acts in relation to the appreciation of film: 'During the great period of cinephilia, the writing that emerged from journals like *Cahiers du cinéma* was not just history or criticism, [de Baecque and Frémaux] explain, but "a creative act no less important than the films themselves"'.[35] Accordingly, this second protagonist, a writerly spectator *par excellence*, stands as the progenitor of the cinephilic pilgrim, for he not only journeys to a place art has inspired in him, he also uses that opportunity to make a creative statement of his own, one that will both figuratively and literally perpetuate further appreciation of the work of art (if by no one else, then at least by himself).

33 Ibid., pp. 49–50. See also Walter Benjamin, 'The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction', in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. and trans. Hannah Arendt (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1988), p. 239.

34 Ibid., p. 50.

35 Keathley, *Cinephilia and History*, p. 4.

In his book *The Remembered Film*, Victor Burgin provides a telling example of how such a creative act relates to our ambivalent relation to the real. He tells of the circumstances under which his thoughts recently turned (again) to a sequence of a woman on the Downs above Canterbury from Powell and Pressburger's *A Canterbury Tale* (Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, 1944):

> On the train to Bristol, wondering where to begin the video work I had been commissioned to make, I decided to look for the location in Kent where the scene from *A Canterbury Tale* had been shot, and to make my own images of that site. My decision was over-determined by the fact that this particular scene from *A Canterbury Tale* had intermittently played in my mind over quite a long period of time, and I hoped thereby to exorcize it.[36]

36 Victor Burgin, *The Remembered Film* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), pp. 19–20.

Burgin's choice of the word 'exorcize' suggests a desire to drive out and/or appease a haunting entity. (Are not the best films always still 'alive' for us in this way, haunting us like possessive spirits awaiting the moments at which our memory and cinephilic passion will bring them fully back to life and, thereby, satisfy them – at least for a time?) Another part of this haunting, however, involves the aforementioned ambivalent relation to the real and our deep desire to conflate the fantasy of the cinema with reality. Burgin sees his cinephilic pilgrimage as an opportunity to map that desired conflation onto a genuine landscape, from which he will create his own images. (In fact, the images Burgin filmed eventually formed the basis for his installation piece, 'Listen to Britain', inspired not only by *A Canterbury Tale* but also by the short Humphrey Jennings film of the same name from 1942.) In this sense, the pilgrimage is simultaneously possessive, creative and cathartic: Burgin exorcizes the demons of his ambivalent relation to the real by physically inhabiting the site and then, importantly, taking possession of it through his creative act. This, then, is the mission of the cinephilic pilgrim: to recapture the writerly potential inherent in the fleeting space of psychophysical correspondence through a personal creative act at the profilmic site.

While the film inspires the pilgrim's journey to the profilmic site, the landscape provides a grounded backdrop for the filmic associations and personal creative acts performed there. Such journeys, too, bring the pilgrim face to face with spatiotemporal differences – erasures – in the landscape, frustrating attempts to possess a site and form psychophysical correspondences. Yet, as we shall see, the cinephilic pilgrim, through the personal creative act, can overcome such differences; indeed, such differences enrich the pilgrim's experience, helping to clarify the distinction between tourism and the pilgrimage and making possible the redemption of the real.

Landscape is inextricably tied to the cinephilic pilgrimage. As Wilfred Ewart argues, 'For the individual traveler, travel [is] a discourse between an imagined landscape and the landscape itself'.[37] Like Burgin, many

37 Quoted in David W. Lloyd, *Battlefield Tourism: Pilgrimage and the Commemoration of the Great War in Britain, Australia and Canada, 1919–1939* (Oxford: Berg, 1998).

other cinephiles treasure the Kentish landscape's connection to the events depicted in *A Canterbury Tale*, and they, too, make pilgrimages to the site. In some ways, they are not unlike the religious pilgrims who began the tradition to honour the priest Thomas Beckett, slain at this site some eight centuries before.[38] The Powell and Pressburger Appreciation Society, in fact, holds an interpretive tour every August during which the pilgrims reenact scenes from the film at the locations which Powell used in 1944.[39] Similarly, the International *Somewhere in Time* Enthusiasts (ISITE) make annual pilgrimages to Mackinac Island, Michigan, where they stay at the Grand Hotel (the primary site of the film's narrative), attend lectures about the film, attend panel discussions with the film's cast and crew, purchase ISITE memorabilia and prop reproductions, erect monuments commemorating the film's events and attend several events in the period Edwardian apparel featured in *Somewhere in Time* (Jeannot Szwarc, 1980).[40] (*Somewhere in Time*, in fact, takes this concept of site visitation quite literally, for the protagonist of the film visits Mackinac Island's Grand Hotel as a way of mentally, and hence psychically, projecting himself into the past to meet an actress whose portrait from the hotel has inspired his love. In this way, *Somewhere in Time* echoes some of the concerns of *Vertigo*, wherein issues of time and the recovery of memories are already prefigured into the films themselves). Finally, the recounting of such cinephilic pilgrimages, using personal photographs of the pilgrim in exotic locations, has become a creative form of appreciation and popular entertainment unto itself: the well-rehearsed multimedia presentations by Dr David West Reynolds (in 'real life', an archaeologist) of his cinephilic pilgrimages to sites used in *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977) and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Steven Spielberg, 1981) proved all the rage at the 2006 *Star Wars* Celebration IV Convention in Los Angeles.[41]

How is it that art inspires us to travel? Alain de Botton echoes Kracauer's concept of film capturing the Indeterminate, stating, 'We overlook certain places because nothing has ever prompted us to consider them as worthy of appreciation . . . we tend to seek out corners of the world only once they have been painted and written about by art.'[42] Extending this phenomenon to film, de Botton admits that Wim Wenders's *Alice in the City* (1974) and Patrick Keiller's *Robinson in Space* (1997) inspired him to visit unusual industrial quarters of Germany and London, respectively – places of production not normally classified as prime tourist destinations.[43] Certainly, as de Botton points out, this phenomenon is not new; British attractions now celebrated for their beauty (he mentions, in particular, the Scottish Highlands, the Wye Valley, the Lake District) met only with disdain and scorn before the arrival there of poets and painters in the second half of the eighteenth century (in many cases, most notoriously in the Scottish Highlands, after the landscape had been emptied of the people who once lived and worked there).[44] 'No sooner had the [artistic] process[es] begun', states de Botton, 'than there was an explosion of people traveling around the

38 See URL: http://www.sacredsites.com/europe/england/canterbury_cathedral.html [accessed 4 April 2008].

39 See the documentary featurette 'A Canterbury trail', on Criterion's 2006 release of *A Canterbury Tale*. See also URL: http://www.powell-pressburger.org/Trips/Canterbury/index.html [accessed 4 April 2008].

40 See URL: http://somewhereintime.tv.insite.htm [accessed 4 April 2008].

41 Reynolds published on this topic in 'Return to Tatooine', *Star Wars Insider*, no. 27 (1995), pp. 68–75.

42 Alain de Botton, *The Art of Travel* (London: Penguin Books, 2002), p. 214.

43 Ibid., pp. 210–11.

44 Ibid., pp. 212–14.

isles.'[45] Similarly, admiration for the art and antiquities acquired during the course of empire inspired the wealthy classes of Britain and other colonial powers to embark on the Grand Tour of the Continent, or to India, Egypt and other locations during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[46] Later, as Ford, Taylor and others perfected the processes of mass production that would eventually extend to the mass commodification of art in various forms, tourism inspired by that art increased significantly.[47]

Even when inspired by art, however, tourism differs from pilgrimage. The two have, in many ways, 'crossed paths' in both theory and praxis; indeed, they share many common attributes: both involve a journey undertaken with the hope of experiencing a particular personal phenomenon at a specific destination, and both may, in fact, take place during the same journey (a western Buddhist's pilgrimage to the Bodh Gaya, for example, may include secular sightseeing tours of other sites in India – the Taj Mahal, the Red Fort of Agra, and so on). The specific motivations for tourism and pilgrimage, however, differ. Whereas the tourist hopes to overcome the psychic, physical and spatiotemporal ruptures caused by modernization, the pilgrim seeks to achieve a sense of wholeness and/or healing (physical, mental or spiritual) through a spiritual journey to a revered site.[48]

Tourism, Dean MacCannell tells us, is a product of modernity, 'a kind of collective striving for a transcendence of the modern totality, a way of attempting to overcome the discontinuity of modernity, of incorporating its fragments into unified experience'.[49] These efforts will not succeed, MacCannell claims, because 'even as [tourism] tries to construct totalities, it celebrates differences'.[50] In 2002, I visited the former site of the Hal Roach Studios in Culver City, California, a location at which the US Air Force had produced hundreds of training films during World War II. Instead of the studio, however, I found only Japanese car dealerships and a signifying marker: 'Former Site of the Hal Roach Studios'. Such differentiations, claims MacCannell, '*are* the attractions':

> Modernization simultaneously separates these things from the people and places that made them, breaks up the solidarity of the groups in which they originally figured as cultural elements, and brings the people liberated from traditional attachments into the modern world where, as tourists, they may attempt to discover or reconstruct a cultural heritage or a social identity.[51]

Marker was also among the first artist–critics to notice the separation MacCannell describes. During his many pilgrimages to the *Vertigo* sites, Marker constantly noted the ways in which the Spiral of Time spread ever wider, engulfing cherished memories of the then-present and 'enlarging the contours of the past'.[52] He was particularly astonished in the early 1980s when, during a Berkeley screening of *Vertigo*, the audience 'gasped' at the extreme long-shot view of the city circa 1958, without its now-famous skyline.[53] Commenting on Hitchcock's

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid., p. 211.

47 Benjamin, 'The work of art', pp. 217–49.

48 Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: a New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 12–13; Jill Dubish and Michael Winkelman, *Pilgrimage and Healing* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2005), p. xxvii.

49 MacCannell, *The Tourist*, p. 13.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 Marker, 'A free replay (notes on *Vertigo*)', p. 129.

53 Ibid., p. 128.

panoramic shot, Marker says, 'It's another city . . . a picture as dated as the engraving Scottie looks at [in Elster's office]'.[54] In *Sans Soleil*, too, Krasna writes, 'The small Victorian hotel where Madeleine had disappeared had disappeared itself, replaced by concrete at the corner of Eddy and Gough'. The Podestà Baldocchi florist stills exists, but in a different location from that of Krasna's *Sans Soleil* visit (farewell to the original floor tiles he so admires), while Ernie's (its second floor recreated in exact detail by Hitchcock in a studio), closed its doors in 1995.[55]

Following Marker's 1983 cue, and that of Mike Davis's *City of Quartz* (1990), recent books, films and interactive DVD-ROMs by Los Angeles artist–critics such as Thom Andersen and Norman M. Klein have continued to explore the ways in which modernization and time have brought about the gulfs between contexts and artefacts. Like Bernard's 'Ask the Dust' photo series, Andersen's film *Los Angeles Plays Itself* (2003) and Klein's interactive DVD-ROM, *Bleeding Through: Layers of Los Angeles, 1920–1986*, both examine how urban, social and temporal dynamics inevitably alter environments as we remember them from cinema; unlike Bernard, however, Andersen and Klein restrict their studies of these issues to Los Angeles and its neighbourhoods. Andersen, for example, juxtaposes actual footage from countless Los Angeles-based films with his own shots to demonstrate how our filmic familiarity with that city inhibits any genuine understanding of the racial, economic and political factors that have impacted on its development. Likewise, Klein and his collaborators at The Labyrinth Project employ a unique, user-controlled dissolve technique that allows the DVD-ROM user to watch changes to a period photograph of, for example, Bunker Hill's funicular trolley (featured prominently in Robert Siodmak's 1948 film, *Criss Cross*), as a contemporary photo of the same space 'bleeds through' onto the original photo, ultimately revealing modern structures in the funicular's place.[56] (The once thriving Victorian-era neighbourhood known as Bunker Hill was declared a blight to the city as early as 1913, and redevelopment began in 1959; Klein considers this redevelopment a primary example of urban erasure.)[57] *Bleeding Through* also features reenactments of scenes from various films at the same locations at which they were originally shot, accompanied by a narrator describing the changes to those locations over the intervening years. The screenwriter and director Robert Towne accomplishes much the same effect in *Ask the Dust* (2005), the film version of John Fante's novel (from whence Bernard's photo series derived its name). For the film, Towne and production designer Dennis Gassner recreated Bunker Hill circa 1933 on two football fields in Sun City, South Africa, complete with the funicular incline at Angel's Flight (this latter feat was rendered through CGI effects).[58] Towne's accomplishment in transplanting his reconstruction of Bunker Hill to South Africa speaks to the challenges inherent in seeking psychophysical correspondence at profilmic sites in the face of modernization and urban erasure. (Tellingly, Towne has said,

54 Ibid.

55 Kraft and Leventhal, *Footsteps in the Fog*, pp. 88, 96.

56 Norman M. Klein, Rosemary Camella and Andreas Kratky, *Bleeding Through: Layers of Los Angeles, 1920–1986*, DVD-ROM (Los Angeles, CA: The Labyrinth Project/University of Southern California, 2003).

57 Norman M. Klein, *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory* (London: Verso, 1997), pp. 51–8.

58 See 'The making of *Ask the Dust*', featurette on Paramount's *Ask the Dust* DVD release, 2006.

'*Chinatown*, for me, was acknowledgement I lived with things I loved but could no longer see'.)[59] The vanished Bunker Hill area (the real) can now only become manifest as a facade, augmented with digital effects, somewhere other than its original place, somewhere with open space and a favourable exchange rate. (Towne lists the exchange rate as one of the primary reasons he shot *Ask the Dust* in South Africa.)[60] The common results of Andersen's, Klein's and Towne's labours, then, are virtual tours of the past-as-absent-within-the-now – tours that foreground the difficulty of overcoming the spatiotemporal gaps or of transcending MacCannell's 'modern totality' in our attempts to unite it with the past.

And yet, as MacCannell says, the 'differentiations *are* the attraction'. Part of the *jouissance* of visiting such sites remains not only our fascination with the similarities to filmic memory but also our fascination with difference. What has changed and why? What societal shifts, shenanigans and schemes do these changes reflect? What memories – urban, architectural, social or personal – did these events erase in the process? As a way of answering these questions, Klein, in 1986, began conducting what he called 'anti-tours' of downtown Los Angeles, visiting the sites of long-gone buildings and structures and encouraging others to reflect on how cities, neighbourhoods and streets change: 'I was learning about contractors, ordinances, old and new tenants, shifting demographics', he asserts, '[in other words,] the chain of production that generates the image of a city street'.[61] MacCannell, Juliet Flower MacCannell and Bernie Lubel conducted a similar experimental tour in July 1994 entitled 'You are here (you think)'; during this tour, the three guides bussed their 'metatourists' around San Francisco to visit non-commodified sites – empty lots beautified by graffiti or used by San Quentin prisoners for garden projects; sex shops; and, finally, disturbed graves of early San Franciscans unearthed during the seismic retrofit of the Palace of the Legion of Honor in Lincoln Park.[62] Lubel and the MacCannells encouraged the metatourists to rethink conceptions of typical destinations and consider alternatives to the pre-packaged tour experience. Lubel summarizes: 'If anything can make the old sites new, it's the possibility of reconnecting them to individual experience – personal and social discoveries through real interactions with places as they are now – as we are now'.[63]

Lubel here identifies a point crucial to the experience of a cinephilic pilgrimage: the pilgrim hopes that his/her connection to the profilmic locations will, in some way, 'make the old sites new' again, conquering the effects of the ever-spreading Spiral of Time if not by reversing it, then at least by exercising some human agency from within the eye of its encompassing storm. While the real will always remain unequal to the task of real-izing its own mediated potential, the pilgrim's act of creatively reframing the space – whether through the use of an optical crutch (a camera, or even binoculars or a telescope if used to 'reframe' the site from a different angle or from a distance), reenactments (similar

59 Quoted in Fred Schruers, 'The two Jacks', *Premiere* (September 1990), p. 64.

60 See 'The making of *Ask the Dust*'.

61 Klein, *The History of Forgetting*, p. 3.

62 Bernie Lubell, Dean MacCannell and Juliet Flower MacCannell, 'You are here (you think): a San Francisco bus tour', in James Brook, Chris Carlsson and Nancy J. Peters (eds), *Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, Culture* (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books, 1998), pp. 137–50.

63 Ibid., p. 148.

to the work done by living-history societies at Gettysburg National Military Park or other locations), painting or drawing (as encouraged by de Botton from a model championed by John Ruskin), or critical interventions (as in the work of Cindy Bernard, Thom Andersen, and others) – can not only redeem this inadequacy of the real but also the effects of urban erasure that mar the filmic memory. This redemptive process ultimately facilitates the genuinely spiritual experience that demarcates pilgrimages from tourism.[64]

64 De Botton, *The Art of Travel*, pp. 217–38.

David W. Lloyd writes of a similar demarcation in his book *Battlefield Tourism*. He initially points out the sharp distinction made between the spiritually healing pilgrimages to World War I battlefields and the commercialized exploitation of these sites by local entrepreneurs and governments in order to attract tourists. 'Ex-servicemen's groups such as the Comrades of the Great War and the National Federation of Disabled and Demobilised Soldiers and Sailors', Lloyd states, 'identified the tourist with the war profiteer, who had not participated in the sacrifices required to win the war', and they deeply objected to any money-making efforts associated with the battlefields.[65] Pilgrims, Lloyd claims, were seen differently because they 'respected the dead by attempting to understand the deeper meaning underlying these sites'.[66] And yet, in Lloyd's view, the tourist/pilgrim binary collapses when one considers that the journeys of both types of battlefield visitors contained 'a moral purpose':

65 Lloyd, *Battlefield Tourism*, p. 43.

66 Ibid.

> When ex-servicemen returned to the battlefields they searched for evidence of their memories of the past. Civilians searched for sites which gave meaning to their memories of an imagined war. In Great Britain the memory of the war was infused with a strong sense of loss, and the feeling that an obligation was owed in response to the sacrifice offered by the dead. Travellers viewed the battlefields within this context, remote from the trivialization of the memory of the war experience.[67]

67 Ibid., p. 218.

Of course, Lloyd's collapse in the tourist/pilgrim binary is specific to a particular time and context during which the 'moral purpose' of both types of traveller legitimized their presence at the commemorative sites. Visitors to profilmic sites cannot claim such a common moral purpose, although the access to spiritual phenomena is nevertheless available for those who come with what Ewart calls 'a particular condition of mind'.[68] While the distinction may seem elitist, in truth it is merely phenomenological – and personal.

68 Quoted in ibid., p. 43.

In 1982, Michael Goodwin and Lynda Myles wrote an article for *San Francisco* magazine chronicling their cinephilic pilgrimage to the sites of what they called 'the *Vertigo* tour'. Both residents of the Bay Area, Goodwin and Myles conducted their tour at a time when one could not see *Vertigo* at a legal screening. Hitchcock's estate, which still retained the rights to *Vertigo* and four other Hitchcock films, kept all five films under lock and key between 1973 and 1983 in hopes of securing

lucrative terms for their reissue.[69] For this reason, Goodwin and Myles contacted an underground collector who agreed to screen the film secretly for them in his home.[70] 'At last, our own obsession could be confronted: *Vertigo* was only a beginning, the first step on the *Vertigo* tour.'[71] Upon watching the spirals of the credits, they noted that 'a blue spiral appeared in the center of the iris, spinning slowly against the blackness like an island universe – ominous, hypnotic. We fell into the screen.'[72]

I, too, fell into the screen upon watching the film the second time in late 1991. Since then, I have kept on falling, much like Scottie himself falling helplessly into the empty grave during the nightmare sequence that marks the bridge between the two halves of the film. My pilgrimages over the past fifteen years, in fact, represent attempts to fall deeper, to reach bottom, 'to decipher the indecipherable mystery that began at Golden Gate'. I leave the sites touched yet somehow always wanting more – always wanting that elusive contextual affect and framing that inevitably escape cinephilic pilgrims in their visits to these places; always wanting to control the things about the places that seem to dissolve, like fog, into the ever-morphing ephemera of time. I want the correct gallery paintings arranged just so in the Palace of the Legion of Honor; I want that unique mixture of sun and fog beneath the bridge as I stand in Madeleine's place at Fort Point (the exact spot is now barricaded by the ugliest chain-link barricade one could ever imagine). I want to find Carlotta's grave marker in the cemetery of the Mission Dolores (apparently, one could actually do this for many years) and I want to hear the hollow echoes of my own footsteps in the Mission San Juan Bautista bell tower (at one time extant, but removed in 1949 due to dry rot).[73] I want to recapture what has been consumed by the Spiral of Time.

As I draw near my conclusion, then, I have chosen to step away from theory and move instead towards a brief but intensely personal reflection on what these sites and my pilgrimages to them have meant to me. I know I must beg the reader's indulgence here, but I also hope that in sharing these thoughts, feelings and images, the whole that has preceded this foray will take on new significance and meaning.

I made my first cinephilic pilgrimage to the *Vertigo* sites in 1992, dragging my father and sister in tow. In retrospect, the two were remarkably good-natured about my impromptu agenda, and we even used one another's bodies as makeshift ladder rungs in our attempts to peer over the wall into the Mission Dolores cemetery, which had closed some forty-five minutes prior to our arrival. At the Mission San Juan Bautista later that evening, I asked my father to shoot some video of me running through the cloisters to open the mission's doors (figure 5), just as Scottie does in his pursuit of Madeleine (figure 6). I remember that at the time, this creative, writerly act seemed very important to me, as if I would, someday – upon a subsequent viewing of the video – remember how I had briefly seen what Scottie had seen as he approached the doors;

69 Walter Raubicheck and Walter Srebnick (eds), *Hitchcock's Rereleased Films: from* Rope *to* Vertigo (Detroit IL: Wayne State University Press, 1991), p. 19.

70 Goodwin and Myles, 'Alfred Hitchcock's San Francisco', pp. 51–2.

71 Ibid., p. 51.

72 Ibid., p. 52.

73 Kraft and Leventhal, *Footsteps in the Fog*, pp. 101, 140.

or, at least, see that I had looked as Scottie had looked to the camera's gaze as he approached the door. I do not remember, however, believing that I would ever feel as Scottie felt while running to the doors, and this now seems strange to me.

I did try to capture Scottie's feelings, however, during a recent pilgrimage to the Mission Dolores, a site where the rustic colonial atmosphere easily lends itself to a type of affective teleportation. Stepping inside the chapel, I felt struck, as I always do when visiting there, by the plunge into near-dark one encounters when entering from the bright light of the street, and, similarly, by the muffled silence inside, which also stands in stark contrast to the street. Scottie spends only a moment here, the first true space in the film to set the tone of the 'Old California days'. I always want to linger here, however – which is hard to do, knowing that the cemetery awaits outside the door; and yet the chapel seems, to me, to possess the true essence of Carlotta's spirit (in both senses of the word), trapped unhappily among the religious symbols and dark, redwood beams. When walking in the chapel, the echoes of footsteps invite one to believe she is there, and indeed, in a way, she is, thanks to the film.

Fig. 5. The author at the mission doors. Author's photo.

Please note that this image could not be reproduced due to restrictions from the rights holder.

Fig. 6. Scottie at the mission doors. By kind permission of Universal Pictures.

Fig. 7. Tobin's gravestone. Author's photo.

Even without Hitchcock's soft-focus filters, walking in the enclosed and intimate cemetery adjacent to the Mission Dolores chapel brings one closest, in my opinion, to stepping inside the film and even to occupying the space of psychophysical correspondence. This recent visit proved even better than usual, for I had brought my laptop with me, and I used its DVD feature to help me attempt to map the spaces where Scottie and Madeleine had walked and looked – an effort that met with only limited success. While doing this, I grew increasingly obsessed with at least finding the former location of Carlotta's gravestone. After much effort, I located the site based on the wrought-iron fence design surrounding the gravestone of John Tobin (figure 7), which featured prominently in the background in the film.

Standing before the absent Carlotta gravestone, my various optical crutches already employed and still close at hand, I felt, for the first time, truly in touch with Scottie's feelings, that I had indeed connected with genuine contextual affect. Was I not, after all, like Scottie, hoping to reify an apparition, chasing a precious, enigmatic memory rooted in a fiction, the truth of which I desperately hoped I, in my own time and space, could somehow make real?

At that moment, the light among the rosebushes and pines seemed suddenly softer.

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A century of electronic cinema

WILLIAM BODDY

The prospect of 'electronic cinema' or 'digital cinema' – terms currently used to describe the electronic delivery and display of feature films in public cinemas – has attracted growing attention in the popular and trade presses over the past few years as the film industry grapples with the long-predicted transition to digital exhibition platforms. This anticipated technological shift has unsettled some of the fundamental economic assumptions and practices of motion picture exhibition, promising to alter longstanding relations among theatrical film producers, distributors and exhibitors. More broadly, electronic cinema calls into question the social contexts and meanings of the electronic moving image's proliferating sites of reception, including mobile consumption via handheld devices and the growth of interactive digital signage in public spaces, as well as the theatricalization of the domestic consumption of feature films.[1] This ongoing confounding and dispersal of traditionally demarcated viewing contexts has only slowly begun to be addressed by media scholars and may illuminate the multiple historical and institutional contexts for the consumption of cinema and television.

The study of the transition to electronic cinema can be seen as part of a larger enquiry into the ongoing economic and cultural consequences of 'going digital' across the industries of recorded music, television and telephony. As in the case of the traditional broadcast media, the transition to digital platforms promises to introduce new economic actors into the theatrical film industry, including manufacturers of digital projectors, media servers, and distribution and encryption hardware and software providers.

Unlike earlier technological innovations in film exhibition, including the introduction of sound, the diffusion of colour film stocks, the widescreen and 3-D formats of the 1950s, and multi-channel theatre sound, the shift to electronic distribution and display of theatrical films

1 On non-domestic television reception, see Anna McCarthy, '"Like an earthquake": theater television, boxing and the black public sphere', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video,* vol. 16, nos. 3/4 (1999), and her *Ambient Television: Visual Cultural and Public Space* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); on the theatricalization of domestic TV, see Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies and the Home* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006).

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seems to offer few decisive advantages to moviegoers.[2] One Cineplex Odeon executive complained in 1998 that converting the 28,000 North American movie screens 'would cost billions of dollars, and it's of no benefit. . . .That's billions of dollars, and there's no benefit to the exhibitor or the consumer. So why do it? I'm telling you, it isn't going anywhere. I'm not telling you it's never going to come, but it ain't coming soon. It doesn't give you any benefit.'[3]

Indeed, while studios and some Hollywood filmmakers have extolled digital cinema's promise of pristine, opening-night print quality through the length of a film's theatrical run, the development of electronic cinema is clearly less driven by moviegoer demands than by the anticipated cost savings and new revenue streams envisaged by distributors, equipment manufacturers, and software and network firms. In this light, while it may be tempting to dismiss the importance to film audiences of the shift from shipping reels of celluloid to managing data streams as inconsequential changes in delivery systems – like having a stake in whether existing 35 mm prints are delivered by Fed Ex or UPS – the longer-term consequences of digital distribution and exhibition for audiences and industry players alike may be substantial. The prospect of digital cinema has implications far beyond alternative delivery systems of traditional Hollywood features. Digital cinema has called into question the long-term relationships between filmmakers, distributors and exhibitors and placed the public cinema venue in new potential relationships with other forms of electronic distribution, including simultaneous, so-called day-and-date release via DVD, the internet, and cable and satellite.

For some not-disinterested industry observers, the prospect of digital cinema and the collapse of the traditional window between theatrical release and home video represents a commercial and ontological crisis of feature filmmaking. John Fithian, president and chief executive of the National Association of Theater Owners (NATO), in January 2006 warned that 'all movie products would become homogenized, would look the same. Movies made for cinemas would be no different than movies made for TV'; eventually, Fithian warned, movie screens 'would be nothing more than big television screens'.[4] The NATO head called day-and-date release practices a '"death threat" to the theatrical film industry', and warned on the organization's website that 'there would be no viable movie theatre industry in that new world – at least not a theatre industry devoted to the entertainment products of Hollywood . . . Hollywood studios would be merely one shriveled vendor among many in that new world of movies-as-commodities-only.'[5]

The fearsome economic implications of the brave new world of digital cinema predicted by some industry insiders were matched by some in Hollywood's creative community who warned of the aesthetic consequences of the eroding boundaries between public and domestic exhibition venues. The director M. Night Shyamalan told *The Hollywood Reporter* in October 2005: 'If you tell audiences there's no difference between a theatrical experience and a DVD, then that's it, game's over,

2 See John Belton, 'Digital cinema: a false revolution', *October*, no. 100 (2002), pp. 98–114.

3 Harold Lichtman, quoted in Tom Spears, 'Projecting a new image: digital pictures may soon be available on TV and video, but the costly new technology likely will take longer to hit the big screen', *The Ottawa Citizen*, 4 February 1998, p. A6.

4 Michael Sragow, 'Sea change coming to movie business: indie films to hit big, little screens and DVD – almost at once', *Baltimore Sun*, 26 January 2006, p. 1C.

5 Ty Burr, 'Good timing – or two-timing? Releasing films in theatres and on cable and DVD simultaneously is getting a tryout', *Boston Globe*, 22 January 2006, p. N9. URL: http://www.natoonline.org/ [accessed 31 March 2008].

and that whole art form is going to go away slowly. I'm going to stop making movies if they end the cinema experience.'[6] During the spring 2006 Academy Awards broadcast, the President of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences told his international audience that

> No self-respecting filmmaker finished a shot in a movie, stood back and said, 'That's going to look great on DVD'. Because there is nothing like the experience of watching a movie in a darkened theater – and sharing the experience with total strangers.[7]

Far from Hollywood, the perceived ontological distinctions between electronic and celluloid formats were hyperbolized by Paolo Cherchi Usai, director of the Australian National Screen and Sound Archive, who defended celluloid, '[as] the miracles of light, the silver grain of the photographic emulsion, the brush stroke on a canvas. . . . Digital reproduction eliminates the texture of the grain of the film. To me digital cinema stands to cinema as a condom stands to sexual intercourse. It is clean and safe and one hardly feels anything.'[8]

Notwithstanding the overheated, even apocalyptic tone of some of the current discussion of digital cinema, however, it is important to recognize that experiments in the production and exhibition of electronic images for public audiences have a history extending back several decades. Indeed, the *idea* of electronic cinema – as opposed to its technological and commercial accomplishments – has played a role in wider debates over media forms and institutions over the past century. The history of the idea of electronic cinema suggests the term is a complex and multivalent one, encompassing not only new means of moving-image exhibition, but also new economic models of production and distribution, novel textual forms and new viewing protocols. The diverse literature on electronic cinema extends beyond the traditional broadcast and film industries, drawing upon the ideas of freelance pundits and technophiles and independent filmmakers and videomakers. Rather than attempt to police the slippery, even promiscuous meanings of the term electronic cinema, it may be more productive to unpack the complex and sometimes incoherent technological figure evoked and the strange bedfellows who have come together to give it life.

If until recently the long record of electronic cinema largely represents a 'road not taken', there nevertheless may be value in investigating the particular ways in which it has functioned to crystallize wider power struggles, aesthetic debates and cultural anxieties across eight decades of moving image culture. Trade and public responses to this long history of imaginative scenarios and technological demonstrations of electronic cinema can illuminate the still underexplored history of television reception outside the home, throwing into relief the assumptions and implications of broadcast television's close association with postwar domesticity. Scrutiny of both the technological dream-life of electronic cinema as well as its concrete applications over the years suggests that electronic cinema has served as a perennial anchor for critical and utopian critiques of the specific

6 Monica Mehta, 'Bursting Hollywood's "Bubble"', *Media Culture*, 27 January 2006, np.

7 Quoted in Lee Grant, 'The showmen: Alan Grossberg, John Ellison Jr. are banking on technology – and their love of movies – to guide Ultrastar', *San Diego Union-Tribune*, 18 June 2006, p. F1.

8 Nicola Christie, 'A defining moment: a digital revolution is sweeping through filmmaking', *Financial Times*, 15 October 2005, p. 52.

institutional forms of both cinema and television in the USA and elsewhere. Across much of the twentieth century, diverse figurations of electronic cinema have offered a way for rivals and critics of both broadcast television and the theatrical film industry to imagine alternative textual forms, commercial practices and viewing regimes for the reception of moving images. Part of the value of examining the admittedly economically marginal and technologically imperfect historical iterations of electronic cinema is the manner in which they may throw into productive relief the precise nature of the inherited and commonsensical notions of both domestic television and motion picture exhibition as dominant social practices.

Attempts to deliver electronic images to mass public audiences reach back to the technological and commercial beginnings of television in the 1920s and 1930s, and parallel the rise of the broadcast television industry in the USA and elsewhere. Furthermore, in the extended period of nearly half a century of public anticipation of images by wireless, the imagination of large-screen electronic images staged in public venues recurs as frequently as domestic reception scenarios. William Uricchio has argued that the fondness of cinema's earliest audiences for the so-called 'rocks and waves' genre of early film actualities suggests an inchoate public appetite for the live quality that only an electronic medium could supply.[9]

An account of the archaeology of electronic cinema would, after noting its imaginative figuration in the extended prehistory of broadcast television, consider the flurry of international interest in theatre television between the 1920s and the early 1950s across the globe. For example, some of the earliest experiments of Scottish television pioneer John Logie Baird were directed, according to a provincial British newspaper in January 1924, 'upon perfecting an invention which at some not very distant date may enable people to sit in a cinema and see on the screen the finish of the Derby at the same moment as the horses are passing the post'.[10] In fact, the colourful history of Baird's decade-and-a-half activities related to cinema television leading up to the beginning of World War II are signposted by a series of public demonstrations of successive Derby broadcasts upon ever-larger screens before ever-larger audiences. Baird's efforts included a partnership with Gaumont-British Pictures Corporation in the formation of a new firm, Cinema Television, organized to programme and equip a chain of theatres with Baird's projection apparatus. In their campaign for the allocation of spectrum space for distributing unique programming to specially-equipped theatres, Baird and his allies repeatedly appealed to British national pride and self-interest in support of a set of British-developed technical standards over those championed by the US firm RCA, pointing to the earlier transition to sound in British theatres, when Hollywood studios restricted their films to British cinemas which licensed their proprietary sound technology.[11] However, while by 1939 cinema television – installed in five London theatres with a total capacity of over 7000 seats – was more advanced in the UK than in the USA (as indeed was broadcast

9 William Uricchio, 'Ways of seeing: the new vision of early nonfiction film', in Daan Hertogs and Nico De Klerk (eds), *Uncharted Territory: Essays in Early Nonfiction Film* (Amsterdam: Netherlands Film Museum, 1997), p. 130.

10 *Hastings and St Leonards Observer*, January 1924; quoted in Russell Burns, *John Logie Baird, Television Pioneer* (London: Institution of Electrical Engineers, 2000), p. 334.

11 Ibid., p. 349.

television), the intervention of World War II and Britain's slow postwar recovery meant that the main arena for developments in electronic cinema shifted across the Atlantic.

The early history of cinema television in the USA largely parallels the British experience. The prospects for theatre television were integral to the 1929 stock swap between Paramount Pictures and the young CBS radio network, a deal hailed by CBS President William Paley as 'a master combination of direction, facilities, talent and resources'.[12] The Paramount–CBS deal came at a turbulent time in Hollywood business history, associated with the introduction of sound and at a period of uncertainty about the commercial prospects and applications of television inside and outside the home. About television 'one thing is certain', Paley told a St Louis group in January 1929. 'It is coming; whether it be in two years or five, it is sure to come'.[13] The activities in theatre television across the globe between 1930 and the early 1950s reflected deep reservations within both the broadcast and film industries about the viability of the economic model of commercial radio for broadcast television. As Paley argued in 1930: 'someone will have to foot the bill for home television, and it is hard to conceive of an advertising sponsorship of the filmed efforts of Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks'.[14] Instead, offering a vision of a perspective theatre television service involving supersized screens, full colour and 3-D, Paley argued in 1929 that 'the home can hardly be expected to be transformed into a modern theatre having all the perfected devices and appurtenances available to the theatre'.[15] However, despite the confidence of Paley and many others around 1930 regarding the imminent commercial prospects for mechanical television, by early 1933 CBS had abandoned its experimental broadcasts employing a sixty-line mechanical scanning television system, and for most of the subsequent (and extremely profitable) decade, CBS acted instead to protect its lucrative AM broadcasting interests in a series of defensive and arguably obstructive tactics regarding television, both domestic and theatre-based.

As in the UK, speculative interest in the use of electronic images in public cinema predates the postwar commercial launch of broadcast television in the USA. Efforts included 1930s demonstrations in the USA by the British firms Baird and Scophony as well as business partnerships between Paramount and CBS and extensive and sustained RCA theatre television efforts, beginning with a 1930 demonstration of an electronic image projected on a six-by-eight-foot screen in Schenectady, New York.[16] Both Baird and RCA organized public demonstrations of theatre television at the 1939 World's Fair in New York, and Paramount joined as an equity partner in the founding of the Scophony Corporation of America in 1943.[17] While World War II interrupted theatre television development in the USA, investments and commercial experiments resumed after the war and peaked in early 1952, at a point when 102 theatres had been equipped for electronic exhibition and plans for a number of theatre television networks were announced.[18] In 1985

12 William S Paley, address, St Louis, January 1929 (Collection CBS Records Library, New York); quoted in William Boddy, '"Spread like a monster blanket all over the country": CBS and television, 1929–33', *Screen*, vol. 32, no. 2 (1991), p. 175.

13 Ibid.

14 William S Paley, 'Radio and entertainment', in Martin Codel (ed.), *Radio and its Future* (New York, NY: Harpers, 1930), p. 67.

15 Ibid., p. 66.

16 Douglas Gomery, 'Failed opportunities: the integration of the US motion picture and televison industries', *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3 (1984), p. 221.

17 Ibid.

18 Douglas Gomery, 'Theatre television: the missing link of technological change in the US motion picture industry', *The Velvet Light Trap*, no. 21 (1985), p. 59.

Douglas Gomery called 1950s theatre television the 'missing link of technological change in the US motion picture industry', between studio efforts before 1948 to invest directly in broadcast station and network operations and the successful innovation of the theatrical formats of widescreen and 3-D after 1952. However, in the face of the Federal Communications Commission's unwillingness to allocate spectrum for programme distribution, limited and expensive programme sources, the ongoing studio divestitures resulting from the Paramount consent decrees, and the commercial success of Cinerama in autumn 1952 and Cinemascope in early 1953, theatre television in the USA quickly diminished into the fitful history of the occasional prize fight, political convention and business conference.[19]

The experience of the Swiss firm Eidophor was typical of theatre television's diminished status after the early 1950s. After developing an industrial prototype in 1943, the company achieved greatest public prominence in 1953, when Twentieth Century-Fox head Spyros Skouras announced a planned $3 million installation of Eidophor projectors in hundreds of Fox theatres across the USA to offer special sporting events and stage musicals, deploying a massive projector which *Life* magazine described as 'a fifteen-foot weapon against TV'.[20] However, the Eidophor projector at the time, which employed CBS's field sequential colour system, had serious technological limitations; only two per cent of the projector light reached the screen, requiring the use of enormously powerful arc lamps (375,000 lumen) which consumed a carbon rod within fifteen minutes, producing such intense infrared radiation that a piece of wood placed in the light path would immediately burst into flames.[21] By 1958 Fox formally cancelled its option for 1000 projectors after buying only three units, and Eidophor retreated into the servicing of low-profile applications of large-screen television for education, medical demonstrations, corporate trade shows and teleconferences, military and aeronautics command and control systems, prize fight and other sporting events, rock concerts, off-track betting halls, political conventions and evangelical crusades (one high point in Billy Graham's 1970 campaign involved the deployment of thirty-nine projectors across ten European countries).[22]

Notwithstanding the marginal applications of theatre television following the collapse of the ambitious plans of the early 1950s, by the late 1960s there emerged a new and distinctly utopian technophilic discourse which placed electronic cinema as the central agent of thorough-going change in existing media institutions, aesthetic forms and audience paradigms. One important strand of the various discourses on electronic cinema over the past four decades is rooted in a disparate group of artists, filmmakers and critics who embraced electronic moviemaking, distribution and exhibition as alternatives, and possible successors, to the dominant institutions of broadcast television and theatrical motion pictures. This utopian strand emerges from the video activists of the 1960s, instantiated in popular manifestos like Gene

19 Ibid; see also McCarthy, '"Like an earthquake"'.

20 Quoted in Johannes Heinrich, *The History of the Eidophor Large Screen Television Projector* (Regensdorf: Gretag, 1989), p. 22.

21 Ibid., pp. 23, 25.

22 Ibid., pp. 22, 60, 87.

Youngblood's *Expanded Cinema* of 1970 and Michael Shamberg's *Guerilla Television* of 1971, to the work of a diverse set of filmmakers within and outside of Hollywood, including Frank Zappa, Francis Ford Coppola, Peter Greenaway, George Lucas, Mike Figgis and Steven Soderbergh.[23] Championing what he saw as a new personalized synaesthetic cinematic language to replace the 'official' communication structures of narrative drama, Youngblood opened his survey of computer-generated image-making and multi-projector electronic screening environments by sketching the prophetic hero of what he called

> the Paleocybernetic Age: an image of a hairy, buckskinned, barefooted atomic scientist with a brainful of mescaline and logarithms, working out the heuristics of computer-generated holograms or krypton laser interferometry.[24]

Much of the writing about the new promise of electronic cinema was associated with the rise of independent video at the end of the 1960s. A 1969 video art show at the Howard Wise Gallery in New York City seems to have spurred the formation of a number of new production, exhibition and research groups in Manhattan, including Videofreex, the Raindance Corporation, People's Video Theatre and Global Village, a long-lived SoHo exhibition venue which featured 'nine TV screens to show tapes and juxtapose images'.[25] *Guerilla Television*, Shamberg's highly personal survey of the first generation of video activists, celebrated the Sony Portapak video camera-recorder and public access cable television as opposite ends of a new production and exhibition culture in opposition to the institutional structures of both broadcast television and theatrical exhibition. Shamberg argued that 'broadcast television is structurally unsound . . . the system is fabulously overcentralized and wildly unstable. . . . In place of beast-TV we need . . . a generalized video system [with] the decentralization of the means of production as well as those of distribution.'[26] *Guerilla Television* celebrated the growth of small-format video community production and storefront video theatres and described the plans of members of the Videofreex collective who left New York City for a communal home in the country:

> They plan to extend their life style to Media Buses . . . touring from town to town giving video shows and making tape. This is more or less analogous to rock road tours and will probably become self-sustaining when cable-TV opens up; a traveling troupe of video technicians and entertainers being paid to do local gigs at local TV studios or shoot tape in local communities.[27]

The association of video activists with the communitarian ethic and social activism of the rock counterculture of the late 1960s was underscored by the 1971 release of Frank Zappa's *200 Motels*, a fictionalized road trip rockumentary featuring Ringo Starr and the

23 For a discussion of the recent history of expanded cinema and digital cinema, see Holly Willis, *New Digital Cinema* (London: Wallflower Press, 2005), and Jeffrey Shaw and Peter Weibel (eds), *Future Cinema: the Cinematic Imaginary After Film* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003).

24 Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (New York, NY: EP Dutton, 1970), p. 41.

25 Ibid., pp. 11–12.

26 Michael Shamberg, *Guerilla Television* (New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 32.

27 Ibid., pp. 58–9, p. 52; for a detailed account of the Videofreex collective, see Perry Teasdale, *Videofreex: Amereica's First Pirate TV Station and the Catskill Collective That Turned it On* (Hensonville, NY: Black Dome Press, 1999).

Mothers of Invention, which was shot on video and transferred to 35 mm film for conventional theatrical release. The ethos was recently echoed in the 2006 Beastie Boys concert movie, *Awesome: I Fuckin' Shot That*, assembled from footage of a 2004 Madison Square Garden concert captured by fifty-five audience members supplied with camcorders by the band.[28]

A decade after video activists began championing electronic cinema as a challenge to the customary practices of broadcast television, another group, within the Hollywood industry, seized upon a different vision of electronic cinema as a tool to overthrow traditional practices of Hollywood film production, distribution and exhibition. Most prominent among these was Francis Ford Coppola, who, on the heels of massive commercial success of the first two Godfather films (1972, 1974) and the critical success of *The Conversation* (1974) and *Apocalypse Now* (1979), began working with an early Sony analogue HDTV system while repeatedly proclaiming the radical potential of electronic cinema as a production tool. He told a journalist in 1982:

> The day is coming when the Hollywood establishment will be knocked over because of a revolution in electronic technology. The technology is about to hit the industry like a baseball bat and now – not three years in the future. New aspects of the application of electronics to cinema will not only reduce costs but also expand possibilities for the film maker. . . . The new technology is as important to modern man as the discovery of fire was to early man. We are going to turn in the distant future into a race of people who possess extraordinary communication with one another – and the language of communication will be art . . . we could also have a balanced society, with an artist class leading the culture toward something approximating a happy family or tribe.[29]

The director told one interviewer in 1981 that 'in two years there won't be any more film shot', and boasted to another reporter the same year that 'it's going to be survival of the fittest and the long-established studios will be brought down'.[30] However, the disastrous performance of Coppola's 1982 *One From the Heart* (the $26 million production brought in less than $1 million at the box office, despite being recut and rereleased by Coppola[31]), intended to be the showcase for the economic and aesthetic advantages of electronic cinema, instead doomed the filmmaker's hopes to challenge the economic powers and production practices of Hollywood.

Despite Coppola's early 1980s predictions of the quick rise of electronic filmmaking in Hollywood, the next two decades witnessed only sporadic attempts to release films shot in various high-definition video formats in theatrical 35 mm (including George Schlatter's 1976 *Norman Is That You* with Red Foxx, Peter Del Monte's 1988 *Julia and Julia* with Kathleen Turner, Robby Benson's 1989 *White Hot*, and Mike Figgis's 1999 *Time Code*) and the steady infiltration of electronic tools of location sound recording, post production, and multi-channel theatre

28 Drew Wheeler, 'Zappa: a man who knew no boundaries. Musical innovator, countercultural hero was 52', *Billboard*, 18 December 1993, np. On the Beastie Boys film, see Jason Silverman, 'Awesome: I sat through that', *Wired*, 23 January 2006. URL: http://www.wired.com/news/culture/0,70060-0.html [accessed 31 March 2008].

29 Francis Ford Coppola, 'American culture is controlled by cynical middlemen', *US News and World Report*, 5 April 1982, p. 68.

30 Quoted in Jon Lewis, *Whom God Wishes to Destroy: Francis Ford Coppola and the New Hollywood* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), pp. 11, 10.

31 Vincent Canby, 'Are we headed to a one-film future?', *New York Times*, 27 January 1985, p. B17.

sound systems. In 1983 George Lucas introduced his Editdroid electronic editing system, originally employing analogue videotapes, then laserdiscs; in 1993 the first feature (*Lost in Yonkers*) was edited on an Avid, and by 1996, 80% of all Hollywood features were edited digitally (an estimated 85% of them on an Avid in 2006).[32]

After nearly two decades of the steady infiltration of electronic production and postproduction tools, the launching point for contemporary discussion of digital exhibition came in Lucas's presentation at NATO's 1999 ShoWest convention. The impact of Lucas's speech, the 'shot heard round the world', and the public screening that year of *Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace* in four digitally-equipped cinemas across the USA, inspired a Texas Instruments executive in 1999 to predict optimistically: 'We think there's an opportunity to have a few hundred projectors in theaters in two to three years, and a few thousand in three to five years'.[33] The perceived power of the *Star Wars* franchise at the time was such that executives at Lucasfilm predicted that digital cinema would effect a wider realignment of power between producers, distributors and exhibitors. *Phantom Menace* producer Rick McCallum told *Millimeter* magazine in 1999:

> Digital production is not an end all; it's just that you have control now. What is wrong with that? That drives costs down; it creates low-cost tools for much younger filmmakers – you don't need to be a part of the machine of Hollywood anymore. And that freaks a lot of people out.[34]

Echoing Coppola's heady claims for electronic cinema nearly two decades earlier, McCallum told the magazine:

> It's a fantastic time to be making movies; it's a fantastic time to watch all this stuff happening. . . . It's so brilliant because it is democratizing the process. . . . You know, if you weren't a part of the 'club,' you couldn't get a movie made, and if you did, you couldn't get it seen. But, that is all going to change, and that is the best thing in the world. That is what is going to cause the fear, the pain, but it is so wonderful.[35]

The producer described the unique market power of the Lucas franchise:

> Because [*Phantom Menace*] is now up to $410 million in the United States (as of August 1), and we're going to do a billion worldwide, we're going to go back to the theater owners for *Episode 2* and say 'You have to put in a THX system, or you don't get the film'. By the time *Episode 3* comes out, we'll say, 'If you want it, you'll have to use a digital projector' – a 'take it or leave it' situation.[36]

Despite McCallum's swagger, by the 2002 release of *Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones* there were still only 125 digital screens out of a total of 133,000 across the globe, and that year saw only twenty-five films released in digital format, up only modestly from eighteen films the previous year.[37] Around the same time, *Daily Variety* reported that a

32 David Ansen and Ray Sawhill, 'The new jump cut', *Newsweek*, 2 September 1996, p. 64; see also Cade Metz, 'Hollywood reboots', *PC Magazine*, 3 May 2006, p. x1.

33 Paul Breedlove, programme director for digital cinema at Texas Instruments, quoted in Jack Mathews, 'You ain't seen nothin yet! Digital projectors are set to kick off a revolution in how we view movies', *New York Daily News*, 11 April 1999, p. 2.

34 Peter H. Putman, 'A digital force: Lucasfilm on electronic cinema', *Millimeter*, October 1999, np.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Katherine Wright, *Digital Cinema Factbook* (Leicester: Dodona Research, 2004), p. 3.

dozen major exhibition circuits were in the midst of bankruptcy proceedings, following an earlier period of over-expansion.[38] Indeed, the first half-decade of digital cinema since Lucas's announcement was characterized by a parade of confident statements of technological advance and commercial inevitability in the face of painfully slow progress in expanding the number of digital theatres and theatrical product.

The central unresolved tension in the sometimes-fevered trade debates over digital cinema in recent years is that between consolidation and decentralization. On the one hand, some exhibitors warned in 2002 that digital exhibition would allow studios to move slow-opening films out of theatres precipitously, increasing box-office volatility, and reinforcing the blockbuster logic of saturation release and marketing. One exhibitor explained to a journalist:

> Right now we schedule our showtimes,' [but with digital systems, the content providers] have the ability to push a button on a computer that shuts you down. I love the flexibility of it, but again, who controls the gateway? If I pre-empt a movie for a David Bowie concert, the studio now knows it. It's creepy. It's like *Fahrenheit 451*, Big Brother.[39]

The media critic Robert McChesney predicted that the 'family farmers' of the exhibition business – smaller, independently-owned screens showing independent fare – would be squeezed out of the business.[40] Such fears of the consolidating effects of digital exhibition echoed the dystopian vision offered by Jean Luc Godard in Wim Wenders's 1982 documentary *Room 666*, describing the fulfillment of Hollywood's dream of the simultaneous projection of a single film on all the world's screens.[41]

On the other hand, other contemporary industry observers see digital cinema opening up new programme sources for exhibitors and a new exhibition model for directors; according to Arnold Vahrenwald's 2004 CentreBar report on digital cinema, 'theoretically, the role of the distributor could disappear, since it is conceivable that the exhibitor commissions the films directly from the producer'.[42] An executive of a firm which installs digital equipment argued that 'the studios are afraid of the loss of control that digital sets forth. Once you have digital equipment, exhibitors can play whatever they want on a given day. This changes the balance of power between exhibitors and Hollywood.'[43] Those predicting decentralization point to the economic appeal of less expensive, lower-resolution e-cinema systems suitable for advertising and non-feature film material in traditional cinemas and for bringing independent movies to new smaller venues serving geographically dispersed public audiences. Recent publicly-supported initiatives in Sweden and Britain have supported new film exhibition venues equipped with digital projectors. The UK Film Council initiated a National Lottery-funded scheme to underwrite 80% of the equipment costs for traditional and untraditional venues (including hair salons) in

38 Carl DiOrio, 'Digital gurus can't send in "The Clones"', *Daily Variety*, 14 February 2002, p. 1; see also Peter Putnam, 'Alternate showings', *Millimeter*, May 2001, np.

39 Ian Grey, 'Digital-video projection promises big money for the entertainment industry', *Baltimore City Newspaper*, 31 July–6 August 2002, np.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 Arnold Vahrenwald, *E-Cinema: Possible Juridical, Industrial and Cultural Consequences* (Berlin: Rhombos-Verlag, 2003), p. 70.

43 Adam L. Penenberg, 'Revenge of the nerds', *Fast Company*, July 2006, p. 62.

underserved markets, in exchange for the exhibitor's agreement to feature a measure of independent and art-house programming.[44] A Bristol newspaper recently credited the regional digital cinema initiative for boosting the appeal of rural living in an article entitled 'Much better to commute down a lane instead of a motorway'.[45] Using European Union funds, Sweden set up a circuit of small community e-cinemas for rural areas to host mostly Swedish films, theatrical productions and concerts.[46] In 2003 plans were announced to expand European DocuZone (retitled CinemaNet Europe in 2004), a network of ten Dutch e-cinemas devoted to alternative documentary works, to seven more European countries and 175 screens networked by satellite, underwritten by $2.7 million of EU funding.[47] For some advocates, the growth of relatively inexpensive, lower-resolution e-cinema promises exhibitors relief from their long-resented dependence upon studio product, opening up possibilities for alternative revenue streams from cinema advertising and business teleconferencing and new programming sources in the direct licensing of sports and music events.

While the diffusion of e-cinema venues seems to offer independent filmmakers working in the relatively inexpensive production format of digital video the opportunity to deal directly with exhibitors, the continued need for substantial marketing expenditures complicates such efforts. The Sundance Film Festival began hosting digital video demonstrations in 1995 and was the first major film festival to feature digital projection in 1999; by 2005, twenty-four of the thirty-two films in the Independent Film Competition were projected digitally, double the number of the previous year. At the same time, the proliferation of micro-budget DV features has not yet created a new business model for independent filmmakers.[48] *Variety* in January 2006 pointed to the failure of several recent producers of independent DV films, including BlowUp Pictures, producers of the earlier DV modest hit *Chuck and Buck* (2000). BlowUp Pictures co-founder Jason Kliot told the magazine that 'it's nearly impossible for an independent entity to survive just by making and selling movies. . . . If you don't own the means of distribution, there is no valid production model.'[49]

Indeed, Kliot closed BlowUp Pictures in 2005 to run HDNet Films, the production arm of dotcom billionaires Mark Cuban and Todd Wagner's 2929 Entertainment, a digital-video based mini-empire consisting of a production arm (responsible for George Clooney's 2005 *Good Night and Good Luck* and Steven Soderburgh's 2006 *Bubble*), an HDTV cable network, DVD distributor Magnolia Pictures Distribution, and Landmark Theatres, the largest chain of art-house cinemas in the USA. Mark Cuban's controversial decision to release *Bubble* on DVD only a few days after its Landmark theatrical release represented an unsettling precedent threatening the traditional Hollywood practice of staggered releases to theatrical, DVD, pay-per-view, cable and broadcast windows. In a similar move towards vertical integration and day-and-date release practices, Rainbow Media's IFC (owned by Cablevision Systems), in

44 Wright, *Digital Cinema Factbook*, p. 53. URL: http://www.dvdvideointernational.com/images/EDZ_info_engl.pdf [accessed 31 March 2008]

45 'Much better to commute down a lane instead of a motorway', *Western Daily Press*, 7 December 2005, p. 28.

46 Patrick von Sychowski, 'Euros build e-network with eye on niche markets', *Variety*, 3 February 2003, p. A10.

47 Bobbie Whiteman, 'DocuZone links Euro exhibitors', *Daily Variety*, 26 August 2004, p. 8. On DocuZone (renamed Cinema Net Europe in 2004), see also Brendan Christie, 'More docs headed for the big screen?', *Playback*, 28 April 2003, p. 16; Matthew Sylvain, 'Eight countries band together to promote theatrical docs', *Realscreen*, 1 February 2004, p. 10; Marlene Edmunds, 'Dutch doc program plans Euro growth', *Daily Variety*, 9 February 2004, p. 14; Stuart Kemp, 'DocuZone project looking to form network for docs', *Hollywood Reporter*, 9 February 2004, np.; Michael Wright, 'European DocuZone', *Sunday Times*, 15 February 2004, p. 35. For an account of the place of CinemaNet Europe in the post-broadcast universe, see Yvonne Gordon, 'Documentary makers throw out the rule book', in *The Irish Times*, 2 January 2007, p. 12. For an optimistic assessment of the promise of e-cinema for European documentary and independent filmmakers, see an essay by a researcher for Docspace, an affiliate of Cinemanet Europe, Michael Reilly, 'Let there be Lumière', August 2004. URL: http://www.docspace.org.uk/DigitalCinema.asp [accessed 31 March 2008].

48 Jason Silverman, 'Whither the DIY auteurs of DV?', *Variety*, 18 January 2006, np.

49 Jason Silverman, 'DV studios can't make a buck', *Variety*, 26 January 2006, np.

early 2006 announced plans to release as many as twenty-four independent films a year in art house theatres and via a new video-on-demand service offered to cable operators.[50] Part of Soderburgh's six-picture deal with Cuban and Wagner announced in January 2006, *Bubble* took eighteen days to shoot, used a crew of six, and cost $1.6 million. Soderburgh, for one, was enthusiastic about the possibilities of digital cinema radically to remake Hollywood's business model, telling a journalist in late 2005:

> Here's what I think's going to happen ultimately. I don't know how quickly. You'll see named filmmakers self-distributing their own films. Because if I can go to the bank and get the money to make a movie, and (if) in two to four years the digital changeover has happened in the US and all the theatres are digitally projecting, I'll just go right to the theatre . . . I don't need to go to anyone else, I'm just putting it on a server.[51]

Elsewhere, Soderburgh compared the prospect of simultaneous day-and-date release of feature films to a diner's choice between eating in a restaurant or having a takeaway.[52] Exhibitor concerns about day-and-date release practices were supported by a December 2005 study by the investment bank JP Morgan, which projected that the collapse of the traditional staggered release dates of the theatrical and domestic video box offices would reduce theatrical box-office revenues by 49% while boosting DVD sales revenues 78% and DVD rental revenues 64%, with the overall effect of increasing studio revenue 36% from $15 billion to $20 billion.[53] The divergence of studio and exhibitor interests on the issue of day-and-date releasing seems irreconcilable.

Digital cinema also promises – or threatens – to bring to the theatrical film experience some of the aesthetic forms and programme practices of broadcast television, including the proliferation of theatre advertising and the possibility of projecting differently-rated versions of the same film depending on the time of day, bringing the possible introduction of cinema's own family hour of expurgated texts.[54] One studio executive told the *Los Angeles Times* in January 2006 that digital cinema would allow [us] to 'do things we haven't been able to do historically in a film-print world – things like making different versions of a movie available during the theatrical window. As an example, you could have a film that plays at 7 p.m. in a PG-rated version and then again at 10 p.m. in an R-rated version so you can make that film more accessible to a broader audience.'[55]

However, the most obvious way in which digital cinema promises to collapse the distinct experiences of theatrical and domestic consumption of feature films concerns cinema advertising. Reflecting a division between lower-resolution and less expensive 'e-cinema' equipment suitable for programming screened prior to the feature film and higher-end 'd-cinema' equipment dedicated to the projection of feature films, the rapidly growing sector of screen advertising has boosted the

50 Eller, 'Bubble stirs up Hollywood', *Los Angeles Times*, 27 January 2006.

51 Christie, 'A defining moment', p. 52.

52 Susan Dunne, 'Parallel DVD-film releases are tricky', *Hartford Courant*, 31 January 2006, np.

53 Ibid.

54 Julie Tamaki, 'Exec has positive outlook for digital movie delivery', *Los Angeles Times*, 16 January 2006, p. C1.

55 Ibid.

installation of low-resolution e-cinema systems in hundreds of US movie theatres.[56] 'The simple fact is that the killer application for electronic cinema is advertising,' concluded one 2004 study.[57] Conversely, a 2000 *Screen Digest* report on electronic cinema by Patrick von Sychowski argued that 'in the US it [e-cinema] could prove the "sugar coating"' to get audiences and studios to accept the hitherto resisted practice of adverts before feature films in cinemas.[58] Two firms, CineMedia and Screenvision, have dedicated $50 million to underwrite the installation of low-end video projectors to bring commercials and segments from E!'s *The Soup* to cinema audiences.[59] In 2005, screen advertising revenues increased 20% to $438 million, with ad rates increasing 10% annually.[60] Led by lavish spending by consumer product companies, including Gillette's toothbrush campaign launched in cinemas over the 2005 Fourth of July weekend, the growing practice provoked sceptical reactions from some in the film industry, including Paul Dergarabedian, president of box-office tracker Exhibitor Relations, who complained 'Consumers don't like it. I saw the Oral B commercial. That just blew my mind. I asked myself, "Am I watching TV? Where am I?"'[61]

In May 2003, media research firm Arbitron released its Cinema Advertising Study, what the firm described as 'Arbitron's gift to the cinema industry', whose bullish subtitle was 'Appointment viewing by young, affluent, captive audiences'.[62] Promoting new applications for its 'Portable people meter', the Arbitron study elaborated on the appeal of the cinema venue for advertising: 'Cinema advertising is unique in that it reaches an attentive, captive audience. Consumers aren't subject to the distractions they face at home such as the telephone, remote-control devices, or simply performing household activities away from the broadcast media during commercial breaks.'[63] Using an analogy to broadcast history, the report confidently reassured potential advertising clients that 'contrary to what the popular press may be reporting, the study found that cinema audiences do not mind cinema advertising. Cinema audiences appear to be willing to make the same transition that cable television made in the 1980s: from fee-based commercial-free programming to fee-based programming that includes commercials.'[64]

Given the unsettled picture at this point in the shift to a digital theatrical film culture, a few notes of caution about predicting the pace and consequences of the transition to electronic exhibition may be appropriate. The 9% drop in domestic cinema admissions in 2005 and the slowing of growth in DVD revenues had the Hollywood studios nervously debating whether the box-office slump was simply the result of the lack of a few big hits, or the leading edge of a permanent realignment between public and domestic exhibition venues; this question will only grow more urgent with the (recently resolved) battle between two incompatible formats for high-definition DVDs and the continued diffusion of HDTV sets and internet-based film delivery models. A 2005 Dublin-based consultant's report on the future of the US theatrical box office was relatively downbeat, citing rising home-video competition, an

56 Wright, *Digital Cinema Factbook*, p. 1.

57 Vahrenwald, *E-Cinema*, p. 59.

58 Patrick von Sychowski, *Electronic Cinema: the Big Screen Goes Digital*, quoted in 'Electronic cinema set to transform the movie business'. URL: screendigest.com/press_ecine.htm [accessed 31 March 2008].

59 Phyllis Furman, 'Hate all that stuff before the movie begins? Theaters bringing us more of it – 'consumers don't like it', *Seattle Times*, 8 January 2006, p. J2; see also Gabriel Snyder, 'Ad reels begin with E!', *Variety*, 12 October 2005, np.

60 'Furman, Hate all that stuff before the movie begins?', np.

61 Ibid.

62 Found at URL: http://www.arbitron.com/study_a/cinema_study.asp [accessed 31 March 2008].

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

ageing audience and increasing marketing challenges; the only growth it foresaw in the business of film exhibition was in increased screen advertising.[65] At the same time, the experience to date of a handful of innovative directors working in electronic cinema may not provide much of a roadmap for the aesthetic implications of a digital platform for theatrical film once the major weight of industry practice shifts. While low-resolution e-cinema systems promising new sources of exhibitor revenue from screen advertising and pre-feature material seem poised for wide diffusion, the economic and logistical barriers to the wholesale replacement of celluloid in theatrical exhibition remain substantial. That said, once a commercial tipping point is reached in media technological innovation, large manufacturers can be quick to exit declining markets, as we have seen in the precipitous departure of photographic equipment and film stock manufacturers from the nonprofessional still photography market.

In response to the perceived threat from the home theatre market, exhibitors across the globe launched industry-wide marketing campaigns in 2005 and 2006 under assorted slogans, including 'Cinema – it's the experience that counts' (Great Britain), 'See it only at the movies' (Australia), and 'Go Big' (Canada).[66] MPPA President Dan Glickman shared with his 2006 ShoWest audience some of the marketing lessons from his previous job as US Secretary of Agriculture which involved coordinating industry-wide campaigns for milk, pork and beef producers ('Not to suggest that movies are like pork chops,' he reassured his audience).[67]

In any event, by early 2007 industry leaders could look out on the shifting technological landscape of the theatrical film market with far greater equanimity; 2006 box office revenues were up 6.5% and attendance figures up 5%. The near-simultaneous release of Soderburgh's *Bubble* to theatrical and nontheatrical markets did not inspire a widespread collapse in the traditional staggered release practices; indeed, as one Canadian journalist noted, 'The movie gods punished Soderbergh by making sure nobody saw his film in any format'.[68]

Whatever the immediate prospects for digital cinema, its recent history makes it clear, as the trade journal *Television Broadcast* concluded in mid 2006, that 'television and film entertainment are rapidly changing from a couple of well-defined industries into a multiplicity of networked businesses with multiple business models'.[69] The implications for media scholars of such an obvious and overdue reconcepualization of their object of study seem worthy of extended consideration, though beyond the scope of the present essay. In the meantime, the recent trade press has been littered with hopeful accounts of a digital future, reporting exhibitor experiments with e-cinema broadcasts of Metropolitan Opera performances, World Cup matches and digital gaming events (ten thousand gaming fans assembled to watch the showdown between young champions of *Halo* in South Korea, six cinemas in the London area devoting their screens to gamers playing the videogame version of *Cars* between screenings of the film), the economic viability of these new

65 'Research and markets: for the first time in ten years, the audience numbers for cinema and movie theatres in the United States is expected to decline', *M2 Presswire*, 25 October 2005.

66 On the UK campaign, see 'Coming attraction', *Marketing*, 10 May 2006, p. 19; on Canada, see Philip Marchand, 'Say goodbye to celluloid', *Toronto Star*, 24 June 2006, p. H1; on Australia, see Fiona Williams, 'Cinema biz needs united front', *Encore Magazine*, 3 August 2006, np.

67 John Horn, 'Getting top billing: the blame game. Studios downplay the box-office slump, but theater owners at ShoWest attribute it to bad movies', *Los Angeles Times*, 15 March 2006, p. 1.

68 Marchand, 'Say goodbye to celluloid', p. H1.

69 Neal Weinstock, 'The technology's really cool: and it's where the industry is going', *Television Broadcast*, 1 June 2006, p. 50.

attractions is hardly definitive.[70] *Millimeter* magazine concluded its report on the 2006 NAB Digital Cinema Summit with a sceptical reaction to director James Cameron's rousing speech hailing digital 3-D as the box-office saviour and vowing never to produce a conventional 2-D movie again ('It can get people off their butts and out of their homes, away from their portable devices and back in the theatres where they belong. . . . Who's with me, damnit?'[71]) Wrote *Millimeter*'s S. D. Katz:

> While the exhibitors listened to Cameron carefully, it was clear that the movie theater of the future is not aimed at pure movie lovers. On screen advertising, 3-D glasses, gaming, and sporting events are all parts of the new business model to wring every last cent out of theater real estate when what is really needed are better movies. Turning the cineplex into an amusement park of mixed experiences seems like a life preserver thrown to businessman treading water.[72]

At the same time, the long-term significance of cinema exhibition's digital turn may ultimately depend upon precisely its promise to introduce new economic opportunities and competitive relationships into a business which has been remarkably stable in its technological platforms and business models for most of a century. A 2004 UK-based Dodona Research report on digital cinema argued that

> it is evident that the focus on image quality in debate and discussion concerning digital cinema has, in one sense at least, completely missed the point. In this area, as with other applications of technology, the key is what innovations in business processes digital cinema can facilitate. Digital cinema will not be about replicating existing processes with different equipment.[73]

Finally, it is important for media scholars to remember that, beyond the issues of technical quality and visual resolution, there are also less easily deciphered but powerful psychological and social determinants of the prospects for the confusing array of new services and textual forms across the proliferating platforms of the electronic moving image, from handheld devices and domestic screens to cinema halls and digital signage. In January 2007, *New Yorker* film critic David Denby lamented what he called the platform agnosticism of the young media consumer, indifferent, according to Denby, to the aesthetic determinations of image scale and social context. 'Every kind of screen comes with its own aesthetic, and imposes its own social experience on moviegoers,' he argued, and if it is possible to contest Denby's nostalgia and platform determinism, it is worthwhile to recall that every electronic media apparatus carries with it an association with the magical and the uncanny, serving as a powerful projective object through which personal identity and social communities are forged.[74] The new digital display technologies, traversing and confounding the social and personal boundaries of work and leisure, domestic and public space, and intimacy and self-display, will undoubtedly frame the reception and meanings of moving images in complex and unexpected ways.

70 Matthew Goodman, 'Digital era ushers in epic cinema changes', *Sunday Times*, 30 June 2006, p. 11; Fiona Williams, 'Why the delay?', *Encore Magazine*, 27 July 2006, np.

71 Fiona Williams, '4K rules, OK', *Encore Magazine*, 1 June 2006, np.

72 S.D. Katz, '3D coming at you', *Millimeter*, 1 June 2006, p. 45.

73 Wright, *Digital Cinema Factbook*, p. 98.

74 David Denby, 'Big pictures: Hollywood looks for a future', *The New Yorker*, 8 January 2007, p. 54.

Spectacle/gender/history: the case of *Gone with the Wind*

TOM BROWN

In the 1970s and 1980s, the pages of *Screen* were the site of pioneering work on spectacle in classical narrative film. Subsequent work has stressed its prominence in the modern blockbuster[1] or has historicized spectacle in 'new media' forms with reference to early cinema;[2] however, its role in films of the studio era remains largely neglected.[3] Moreover, it is indicative of the circuitousness with which the academy has addressed this fundamental cinematic concept that perhaps the most valuable of the works emerging from 1970s and 1980s '*Screen* theory' should have attempted to define spectacle in relation to documentary.[4] As its author Steve Neale later reflected, 'spectacle . . . has proved notoriously resistant to analysis';[5] yet Neale is in fact one of very few critics to deal with spectacle so directly. It has become a term often cited but rarely probed, and even more rarely defined.

Feeling that 'spectacle' encompasses too many elements to be usefully discussed in overarching terms, here I shall focus on defining varieties of spectacle associated with one particular mode of filmmaking: the historical film. This category itself lacks clear boundaries, containing as it does a variety of genres (the epic, the biopic, some Westerns, and so on), so I shall relate the issue of spectacle to 'the historical gaze', a recurring trope I consider revelatory of a broad range of historical films. This device articulates the film character's relationship to the history of which he or she is a part and, as a particular performative posture and gaze, it is a literal embodiment of historical filmmaking's wider discursive and rhetorical strategies.

Because of the relative paucity of sustained attention to the function of spectacle in 'classical' or studio-era Hollywood cinema, I focus on a film

1 Geoff King, *Spectacular Narratives: Hollywood in the Age of the Blockbuster* (London: IB Tauris, 2000).

2 See, for example, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (London: MIT Press, 1999), p. 157; Andrew Darley, *Visual Digital Culture: Surface Play and Spectacle in New Media Genres* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 31–57.

3 A forthcoming study by Sheldon Hall and Steve Neale will help to address this imbalance: *Epics, Spectacle and Blockbusters: a Hollywood History* (Detroit, IL: Wayne State University Press, 2008).

4 Steve Neale, '*Triumph of the Will*: notes on documentary and spectacle', *Screen*, vol. 20, no. 1 (1979), pp. 63–86.

5 Steve Neale, 'Hollywood blockbusters: historical dimensions', in Julian Stringer (ed.), *Movie Blockbusters* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 54.

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from 1939, *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming). Although *Gone with the Wind* has long been thought of as a special case within the period, I nevertheless consider producer David O. Selznick's super-production to be unusual primarily for the clarity with which it combines two main kinds of historical spectacle – 'the decor of history' and 'the spectacular vista', which are defined below – and reveals their gendered associations. *Gone with the Wind*, in its lavish production values and production campaign, looks forward to the age of the Hollywood blockbuster, but the film is offered here, principally, as a crystallization of wider trends in the deployment of spectacle in historical cinema of the classical era. The attention to one particular film also aims to show how one can subject spectacle to the kind of close attention normally reserved for other elements of film style. While this essay is partly concerned with positing broader categories of spectacle in historical films, it is the job of close textual analysis to tease out distinctions and nuances that are, in practice, often more subtle and more permeable.

Though I contend that spectacle is most fruitfully considered in relation to particular kinds of filmmaking (the spectacle associated with, for example, the musical and the Western is of a quite different order), it is necessary to sketch some overarching definition and point to some key works on the concept and their implications for subsequent analysis. Without an agreed vocabulary for describing the spectacular and its effects, a collage of terms from previous criticism provides one way of introducing the concept: Laura Mulvey's famous phrase, 'to-be-looked-at-ness', is often evoked in discussions of the spectacular;[6] Neale's description of 'a system which is especially concerned . . . to *display* the visibility of the visible'[7] is a useful definition and, combined with Lacanian analysis, participates in the same critical moment as Mulvey; the 'sudden burst of presence'[8] associated with the cinematic trick, the moment of shock or artifice in 'the cinema of attractions' may be used to historicize spectacle; and in the most sustained analysis of the interrelation of narrative with spectacle, Geoff King defines the latter, with respect to recent blockbuster cinema, simply as 'the production of images at which we might wish to stop and stare'.[9] Many conceptions of the narrative–spectacle relationship seem to evoke the image of narrative as a horizontal line moving forward, while spectacle resides in moments one can represent with a vertical line. The horizontal line asks us to follow a story, while the vertical demands wonder.[10] The principal problem with this is that it treats spectacle and narrative as opposites, a clear obstacle to the consideration of the significance of spectacle to story undertaken in this essay.[11] Moreover, how one defines 'wonder' is no more easily resolved; Richard Dyer's categorization of the 'utopian' affects associated with the Hollywood musical provides one way of approaching this.

Dyer posits the musical number as resolving the problems of the surrounding narrative through a series of transformative emotions: for example, problems in communication are resolved through the emotional

6 Laura Mulvey, 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema', *Screen*, vol. 16, no. 3 (1975), pp. 6–18. The term is widely used by Steve Neale in his essay, 'Masculinity as spectacle: reflections on men and mainstream cinema', *Screen*, vol. 24, no. 6 (1983), pp. 2–16. Moreover, Steven Cohan discusses Astaire's 'to-be-looked-at-ness' in his essay, '"Feminizing" the song-and-dance man: Fred Astaire and the spectacle of masculinity in the Hollywood musical', in Cohan (ed.), *Hollywood Musicals, the Film Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 88.

7 Neale, '*Triumph of the Will*', p. 66.

8 Tom Gunning, '"Now you see it, now you don't." The temporality of the cinema of attractions', in Lee Grieveson and Peter Kramer (eds), *The Silent Cinema Reader* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 45.

9 King, *Spectacular Narratives*, p. 4.

10 The linearity of narrative is a problematic issue with significant implications for how one historicizes spectacle. See, for example, Rick Altman, 'Dickens, Griffith and film theory today', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 88, no. 2 (1989), pp. 321–59.

11 Aylish Wood has taken issue with this separation of spectacle and narrative, though her alternative paradigm of 'timespace' is tied to recent developments in digital special effects. See her 'Timespaces in spectacular cinema: crossing the great divide of spectacle versus narrative', *Screen*, vol. 43, no. 4 (2002), pp. 370–86.

'transparency' (or sincerity) of a song and/or a dance. I believe 'intensity' is the utopian category which may be most usefully kept in mind when thinking about spectacle in a broad way, though Dyer admits it is the most difficult characteristic to pin down:

> What I have in mind is the capacity of entertainment to present either complex or unpleasant feelings (e.g. involvement in personal or political events; jealousy, loss of love, defeat) in a way that makes them seem uncomplicated, direct and vivid, not 'qualified' or 'ambiguous' as day-to-day life makes them, and without intimations of self-deception and pretence.[12]

Although I am concerned below with identifying the meanings behind *Gone with the Wind*'s spectacular moments, when discussing spectacle one should also keep in mind its more purely affective qualities – the tension between musical performance as being both 'representational' and 'non-representational' is a recurrent concern in Dyer's essay. 'Spectacle' is communicative but it may often contain something of 'communication for communication's sake'; more negative views of spectacle see it as gratuitous display (there is a history of using the term to connote crass commercial concerns). A balance needs to be struck, and for this reason I consider that Scarlett O'Hara's (Vivien Leigh) relationship to the spectacle that surrounds her vivifies or 'actualizes' her relationship to her world. I shall go on to outline more fully what I mean by 'actualize' and the relationship of this concept to Vivian Sobchack's evocative but more 'creative' use of the concept of 'onomatopoeia' in her discussion of the historical epic.[13] However one approaches spectacle, there is always a dilemma between a very broad definition, which might conflate all cinematic display with spectacle, and an exclusive definition, which may privilege one form of spectacle over others. I hope the outline of historical spectacle offered here is precise enough to be of use to a range of individual case studies, without dismissing other kinds of spectacle.

Within historical films (films which, in Robert Rosenstone's provocatively broad terms, 'engage, directly or obliquely, the issues, ideas, data, and arguments of the ongoing discourse of history'[14]), spectacle can be divided into two main categories. The first emerges from what I call the 'decor of history'. The decor of history is an excess of detail: detail in the mise-en-scene (decor, but also costume) that is excessive to the requirements of historical verisimilitude. This functions as an embellishment of the sense of place and time (the lavish spaces and costumes of eighteenth-century Versailles, for example) and becomes 'spectacular' when, in Philip Rosen's words, 'with respect to the detail, the liberation is so overwhelming, so playful, so performative as opposed to referential, that we call it spectacle'.[15]

The second kind of spectacle, 'the spectacular vista', is on the other hand an excess of action: excessive in scale and qualitatively excessive (a battle occupying a large valley would be a stereotypical example).

12 Richard Dyer, 'Entertainment and utopia' (1977), in Richard Dyer, *Only Entertainment* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 23.

13 Vivian Sobchack, '"Surge and splendor": a phenomenology of the Hollywood historical epic', in Barry Keith Grant (ed.), *Film Genre Reader II* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1995), pp. 280–307.

14 Robert A. Rosenstone, 'The historical film: looking at the past in a postliterate age', in Marcia Landy (ed.), *The Historical Film: History and Memory in Media* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), p. 62.

15 Philip Rosen, *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 193.

These two kinds of spectacle can be said to have their own gendered associations.[16] The decor of history is associated with the domestic sphere (to the extent that country houses, castles, and so on, can be considered 'domestic'), whereas the spectacular vista generally expresses grander, more hyperbolic visions of history, generally associated with the world of men. Very broadly, in wider historical filmmaking one can see this in the significance of women and also feminized men (the dandy and the effete, wig-wearing aristocrat, for example) in films that stress history's decor, as against the emphasis on men in genres like the war film and Western. Indeed, the spectacular vista is my term for the kind of spectacle King seems to focus on in *Spectacular Narratives*, which is fascinating for the degree to which he ties cinematic spectacle to the American frontier, perhaps the most significant moment/image in that nation's images of its past.[17]

Both categories retain an emphasis on vision, 'decor' stressing attention to more intimate textures of minutiae, while 'vista' designates, evidently, something much grander in scope. The two kinds of spectacle are related to historical films but have particular affinities with related genres. The decor of history, when abstracted from 'proper history', is an important element in films recognized as costume dramas, while the spectacular vista is especially relevant to films which share 'epic' characteristics (a case in point would be the *Lord of the Rings* films [Peter Jackson, 2001, 2002, 2003], whose set pieces are often stressed to be of major significance for the 'history' of its fantasy world). However, one runs the risk of undermining the specificity of the argument, and it is more important to stress the relationship between the two kinds of spectacle and established approaches to historiography. In 1874, Friedrich Nietzsche pointed to the dangers of 'mummifying' the past through an escapist 'antiquarian' approach to its minutiae,[18] and his warnings about the grandiose excesses of monumental history can be related to an emphasis on 'the spectacular vista'.[19] Furthermore, if one were to make analogies with 'official' approaches to history, 'the decor of history' would be linked to a museum, especially a 'living' one, or perhaps a country house, while the 'spectacular vista' could be tied to a massive monument, for example a triumphal arch, which itself promotes awe and which, from its summit, provides panoramic, even 'spectacular' views.

Lastly, it is worth emphasizing that it is potentially problematic to discuss actions and objects as necessarily in and of themselves spectacular; they only become so when filmed in particular ways. Even things one might consider intrinsically spectacular – perhaps the individual acrobatics of a virtuoso dancer or a mass of soldiers marching in unison (one falling outside this more specific discussion of historical spectacle, the other an emblematic subject for a 'vista') – would not have this impact if the filmmaker chose to abstract their qualities of 'to-be-looked-at-ness'. So, for example, I note the use of crane shots and pronounced symmetry in helping to construct the spectacular in

16 Naomi Schor's work has explored the gendering of the distinction between the sublime and detail, concepts that can clearly be related to the aesthetics of the 'vista' and the 'decor of history' respectively. Naomi Schor, *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine* (London: Methuen, 1987).

17 King, *Spectacular Narratives*.

18 Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On the uses and disadvantages of history for life' (1874), in Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 73–5.

19 Ibid., pp. 68–72.

particular moments of *Gone with the Wind*. This seems a basic point, but is nevertheless important if one is not to conflate spectacle with all other visual pleasures the cinema has to offer. (One may enjoy the beauty of some aspect of the mise-en-scene without finding it remotely helpful to call it 'spectacular'.) As I note below, there have been disadvantages in the way psychoanalytically oriented film theory emphasized the gaze as a part of the relationship between spectator and spectacle – that is, in the way that the 'masculine' qualities of narrative agency have been associated with being the bearer of the look, while being looked at has been a mark of a kind of 'feminized' and static passivity.[20] However, there are also advantages in seeing particular looks within films as cueing the spectator to appreciate the spectacular qualities of an image. This also provides a link to my discussion of the 'historical gaze' which, when underpinned by spectacle, as in *Gone with the Wind*, vivifies or actualizes the sense of a character's relationship to the world constructed around them.

Before applying the categories of the 'decor of history' and 'the spectacular vista' to a particular case study, it is worth noting the influence of 1970s and 1980s *Screen* theory on the way one understands the spectacular. Mulvey's landmark account of 'visual pleasure and narrative cinema' not only shaped subsequent feminist film analysis but also the ways in which spectacle was discussed in relation to classical Hollywood cinema. Her prescription of broadly 'Brechtian' aesthetic strategies to disrupt and destroy the objectification of woman pointed to the latter's place in a repressive regime of spectacle and spectator: 'The presence of woman is an indispensable element of spectacle in normal narrative film, yet her visual presence tends to work against the development of a story line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation'.[21] Mulvey's emphasis on the gaze within films and without (in the implied 'male' film spectator) anticipates the analysis here of the deployment of particular looks as cues to recognizing and appreciating the spectacular. However, the associated psychoanalytic theory which sees spectacle as a marker of static, erotic, even fetishistic contemplation is, I feel, less helpful in this context. The above comments on woman freezing the 'development of a story line' and 'the flow of action' point to the problems of following too literally the vertical–horizontal image of cinema mentioned above, and illustrate how much 1970s film theory overstated cinema's indifference 'to the presence of the audience'.[22] As King's work demonstrates, one should avoid assuming narrative and spectacle are necessarily in uneasy tension, let alone consider them irreconcilable;[23] one must also recognize spectacle as, by definition, occupying moments at which films are at their least 'transparent' (in the classic Film Studies sense), their least 'indifferent' to our presence. Support for this position can be witnessed in the eagerness with which recent generations of Film Studies scholars (myself included)[24] have latched on to Tom Gunning's notion of the 'cinema of attractions'[25] as a means of connecting early cinema's exhibitionism with

20 The emphasis on cinema's 'voyeuristic' characteristics was promoted most forcefully in the work of Christian Metz. See, especially, his *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, trans. Ben Brewster et al. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982).

21 Mulvey, 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema', p. 11.

22 Ibid., p. 9.

23 King, *Spectacular Narratives*.

24 Tom Brown, '"The DVD of attractions?": *The Lion King* and the digital theme park', *Convergence: the International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, vol. 13, no. 2 (2007), pp. 169–83.

25 Gunning's historical account is in part a response to Metz's neglect of cinema's 'exhibitionist' qualities at the expense of its supposed 'voyeurism'. Tom Gunning, 'The cinema of attractions: early film, its spectator and the avant garde', in Thomas Elsaesser (ed.), *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (London: British Film Institute, 1990), p. 57.

the heightened visibility of special effects and cinematic tricks in contemporary 'post-classical' cinema. Lastly, the static-ness of Mulvey's early vision of spectacle works against one's concern for identifying its place in the shifting patterns of meaning and affect; patterns which might still be understood in terms of the way they position normative concepts of femininity and masculinity, and the relative power of the two.

Neale's 1983 *Screen* essay expands upon Mulvey's concerns by considering the role of 'masculinity as spectacle', once more stressing the erotic charge of the object viewed. However, as with 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema', the author is greatly, perhaps primarily, concerned with issues of identification.[26] As far as is possible, I wish to extricate our experience of the spectacular (a kind of 'wonderment', if you will) from the issue of identification. This is not to deny the importance of the latter (my consideration of the hilltop ending of *Gone with the Wind* will, very briefly, point to the relationship the film sets up with its female spectators), but only to relegate a potentially overwhelming issue to a position of related but not necessarily intrinsic concern. It is first vital that one understands the role of spectacle in a particular film's meaning making and understand its impact in conveying characters' emotions and their relationship to the world around them. Given its title and subject, it is perhaps surprising that Neale's earlier essay, '*Triumph of the Will*: notes on documentary and spectacle', provides possibly the best model for doing this.

26 Neale, 'Masculinity as spectacle', pp. 4–11.

Leni Riefensthal's 1935 documentary represents a Nazi rally at Nuremberg and its buildup. The film begins with the famous images of Hitler's descent into the city by plane, the clouds parting as if they were a stage curtain:

> The imbrications of framing, composition, movement and clouds in these opening shots function to install *spectacle* as the principle of the film's operations. That is to say a signifying system is installed whose basis lies in a specific form of the evocation and the satiation of the scopic drive, a system which is especially concerned both to stress, to *display*, the visibility of the visible . . .[27]

27 Neale, '*Triumph of the Will*', p. 66.

Though the source is a documentary, Neale's analysis of *Triumph des Willens/The Triumph of the Will* can be used to introduce the way spectacle is incorporated into narrative, especially historical, film. First, Neale's reading of the techniques by which Hitler is marked as 'the basis and centre of its system of spectacle' [28] gives a sense of the dictator's role as a kind of 'star' in the film. Neale cites various lighting effects (light seeming to form a halo round his head) which mark Hitler out 'as object of the look'.[29] Like Mulvey, Neale stresses Hitler's place in a 'relay of looks',[30] but rather than emphasizing questions of control over diegetic space, this illustrates Riefensthal's dynamic use of spectacle and a concomitant shifting of subject/object positions. (Of course, Mulvey emphasizes the relatively static objectification of women, a simplification that was polemically necessary.) Neale analyzes a

28 Ibid., pp. 74–5.

29 Ibid., p. 71.

30 Ibid.

complex system of shots in which Hitler is the *subject*, the bearer of a look at the civic and military spectacle presented in his honour (marching soldiers, women and children bearing flowers), and moments in which onlookers are seen to gaze at Hitler as the spectacular *object*. Thus the passage recounts an event (the buildup to a rally) and brings out this event's spectacular qualities as well as lending them a 'cinematic' dynamism. More than any other medium, film can both represent the spectacular (through its large format, for example) and *create* the spectacular through a relay of intradiegetic looks which, as 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema' points out, also express so much of the power play of cinematic narratives.

The links of *The Triumph of the Will* to historical film spectacle are complex. Riefensthal's film displays the hyperbole of propaganda, both filmic and 'theatrical' (such as the rally), that seeks to figure a present event as 'historic'. Related techniques in classical narrative film uphold monumental visions of history, which, returning to Nietzsche's historiographical categories, have been seen as the dominant Hollywood approach to history, at least until World War II.[31] When the great figures of history are presented in narrative films, they may be endowed with a gaze of comparable command to Hitler's, in which they gaze upon 'the spectacular vistas' of battles or representations of mass, collective action or adulation. Unlike in the Nazi documentary, the gaze of such characters is not tied to a present presented as 'historic', but addresses the historical knowledge of the spectator at the same time as proposing a look into the future, a *foresight*, in which the character appears to see his or her own place in history. This is what I call 'the historical gaze'. Nietzsche's warnings about the uses and disadvantages of monumental history find an extreme echo in *The Triumph of the Will*. Monumental visions of history, to which I make the analogy of the war monument and the triumphal arch, were the most ruthlessly exploited by the fascists, both in their wider verbal and visual rhetoric (which evoked mythic notions of German ancestry) and in their particular brand of fascist spectacle (the Nuremberg rallies). I do not wish to overstate the links between Nazi propaganda and classical historical filmmaking. However, it is worth underlining that the National Socialists were masters of civic spectacle, and Neale's analysis of *The Triumph of the Will* uncovers how such strategies can be made 'cinematic'.

The 'historical gaze' requires definition and clarification of its relationship to the varieties of spectacle associated with historical filmmaking. The historical gaze may take different forms, but is essentially the literal embodiment of the standard rhetoric of many historical films, and a means through which the films address the historical knowledge of the spectator. As is suggested by a number of critics, historical films are, ironically perhaps, often particularly concerned with the contemporary moment at which they are made.[32] This ties in with the example of Warner Bros' 1930s biopics of figures like Benito Juarez and Emile Zola, which have been remarked upon for their

31 Marcia Landy, 'Introduction', in Landy (ed.), *The Historical Film*, p. 8.

32 See, for example, Pierre Sorlin, *The Film in History: Restaging the Past* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), and Marc Ferro, *Cinema and History* (1978), trans. Naomi Greene (Detroit, IL: Wayne State University Press, 1988).

eagerness to point to contemporaneous political concerns.[33] This is also seen in the way that historical heroes of many classical-era biopics resemble figures of *our time* (or rather of the time at which the film is released). They often share our values, our understandings of the world, in contrast to the ignorance and *outdated* attitudes of the historical characters who surround them; what often makes the hero of a biographical picture worthy of our attention can be summed up in the claim, 'he was a great man *ahead of his time*'.

Whether he is a fictional character in a historical situation or a famous figure in his own right, the most potent symbol of a historical character's power is the capacity for foresight. These characters foresee the actions necessary to the progress of history, and in the case of history's most powerful agents (Abraham Lincoln is the classic American example), they seem endowed with a clairvoyance through which they appear to recognize events to come. This foresight is central to the historical gaze, which recurs across many films of the 1930s. Because culture more widely has told us that it is great men who make history, the historical gaze is generally the preserve of male characters/historical figures or, in the case of Scarlett O'Hara, women who acquire 'masculine' qualities. (Below, I shall show how Scarlett's acquisition of the 'historical gaze' coincides with her being forced to occupy the position vacated by her father as head of the household.)

Fig. 1.
Louis Pasteur (Paul Muni) leaves his present as he addresses 'future' concerns.

At its most declamatory, the historical gaze appears as a particular performative posture. One thinks particularly of Paul Muni in a number of William Dieterle biopics of the 1930s in which his head tilts back, his eyes seem to gaze into an imagined distance, and the words delivered by Louis Pasteur/Emile Zola/Benito Juarez seem to address posterity. (See figure 1, in which the eponymous hero of Dieterle's 1935 *The Story of Louis Pasteur* fixes his gaze upon the highest balcony of an auditorium as he addresses 'You young men: doctors and scientists of the future . . .'. He tells them of the need for scientific progress, even during 'the sadness of certain hours that creep over nations'.) As Thomas Elsaesser notes, the

33 See Nick Roddick, *A New Deal in Entertainment: Warner Brothers in the 1930s* (London: British Film Institute, 1983), and Thomas Elsaesser, 'Film history as social history: the Dieterle/Warner Brothers bio-pic', *Wide Angle*, vol. 8, no. 2 (1986), pp. 15–31.

climaxes of Dieterle's 1930s biopics would often take place in 'theatrical' spaces such as a courthouse or an electoral platform,[34] converging the historical gaze with Hollywood's inscription of its own 'entertainment superstructure'.[35] Indeed, the historical gaze can also be thought of in terms of particular spaces. For example, the hilltop or similar vantage point appears particularly suited to the inscription of the 'big history' to come and the character's recognition of his/her place in it.

A sequence which illustrates both the common function of the historical gaze and the way it might serve a particular filmmaker's concerns comes in *Young Mr Lincoln* (John Ford, 1939). Just after the young lawyer and future president, played by Henry Fonda, has won his first court case, he meets his legal adversary and future rival in the 1860 American presidential election (a reality occurring outside of the film's partly fictionalized 1830s-set narrative).[36] In the corridor outside the courtroom, Lincoln comes across Stephen A. Douglas (Milburn Stone) and Mary Todd (Marjorie Weaver) and the latter makes a point of coming over to Lincoln to congratulate him. The preceding narrative has made Todd's romantic interest in Lincoln clear; in reality, Todd would become Lincoln's first lady, and she had in fact also been courted by Douglas. Todd's movement from Douglas to Lincoln is thus understood as her 'choosing' the latter. Lincoln is then congratulated by Douglas in the film's most portentous exchange:

> Douglas: Yesterday I made some remarks about you that I now publicly retract. Furthermore, I give you my sincere promise, never to make the mistake of underrating you again.
>
> Lincoln: Well Steve, I don't reckon either of us should underrate each other . . . from herein.

This conversation clearly foreshadows the Lincoln–Douglas debates of 1858, which were concerned, in part, with the issue of slavery, and were seen as part of the buildup to Southern secession and, ultimately, the Civil War. With the final words, Lincoln fixes Douglas with a hint of a smile, and the emphasis on the words, 'from herein', gives Lincoln the edge in terms of foresight.

Passages such as this illustrate the particular role of the future perfect tense in historical films. As the editors of *Cahiers du cinéma* note, this tense, illustrated by the sentence 'what I will have been for what I am in the process of becoming', 'induces him [the film spectator] to look at history – something which for him has already happened – as if it were "still to happen"'.[37] In a moment coming just after Lincoln's exchange with Douglas, different emotions are used to express the foreshadowing associated with this 'future perfect'. This moment suggests a greater vulnerability in Ford's portrayal of Lincoln than the *Cahiers* editors' emphasis on the 'terrible castrating power' of Lincoln's gaze acknowledges.[38] Lincoln is called to the courthouse steps because, he is

34 Elsaesser, 'Film history as social history', pp. 26–31.

35 George F. Custen, *Bio/Pics: How Hollywood Constructed Public History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), p. 207.

36 Jennifer Smyth discusses the disagreements concerning the extent of the film's fictionalization of Lincoln's early life in her '*Young Mr Lincoln*: between myth and history in 1939', *Rethinking History*, vol. 7, no. 2 (2003), pp. 193–214.

37 'John Ford's *Young Mr Lincoln*: a collective text by the editors of *Cahiers du cinéma*' (1970), trans. Helen Lackner and Diana Matias, *Screen*, vol. 13, no. 3 (1972), p. 15.

38 Ibid.

told, 'the town's waiting'. Figures 2 and 3 come as he stands on the threshold, greeted by the rapturous applause of an unseen crowd:

> his entry into a beam of violent light, the frontal low-angle shot when he faces the crowd whom he greets by removing his hat, the very harsh lighting of the end of this scene, all set this sequence in a very specifically theatrical dimension: congratulations backstage after the performance . . . and in front of a crowd *which is not shown* (which is no longer only the inhabitants of Springfield but of America) retroactively shows the performance of the trial . . . to be a simple rehearsal (provincial tour) and what is to follow (which the whole film has played on as something having already happened which no one could be ignorant of) will be the real performance (national tour).[39]

39 Ibid., pp. 37–8.

Though the courthouse steps remain unseen, the *Cahiers* editors' emphasis on their 'theatrical' function imagines a space which a different filmmaker might have constructed by offering us a 'spectacular' image of the amassed crowd. Here, however, the impact comes from our attention on Lincoln's face and posture ('Lincoln' is perhaps a more appropriate designation, at least for figure 2, in which the hat grounds us firmly in a

Fig. 2.
The hero, complete with iconic hat, greets the crowd outside the courthouse.

Fig. 3.
A mixture of emotions flashes across his face, one of which is clearly fear.

most iconic image of the president). In the light of the previous exchange between Lincoln and Douglas, of *Cahiers du cinéma*'s analysis, and of the idea of 'the historical gaze', this moment can be understood as if it had abruptly transported Lincoln to the presidential balcony. Fear unmistakably crosses his face as if the reality of his destiny ('which no one could be ignorant of') was dawning on him. Ford's choice in filming the scene thus balances the requirement to portray America's most celebrated president as strong, in control and cognizant of his own destiny with the attempt throughout the film to place the emphasis on his more humble, human qualities.

Young Mr Lincoln ends with Lincoln wandering alone to the top of a hill, a storm, clearly signifying the Civil War, raging around him.[40] A dissolve from the rainy hilltop to a rain-covered Lincoln Memorial in Washington completes the transformation (and contrast) between a vulnerable, human Lincoln and his iconic image in the monumental pantheon. A hilltop in *Gone with the Wind* punctuates a more human transformation, one which, though more obliquely, is also related to the events of the American Civil War. Though *Gone with the Wind* generally elides most of the recognized major events of Civil War history (which in historiography's traditionally masculinist discourses are often seen on the battlefield and in the actions of ruthless and/or determined men), Scarlett O'Hara is altered by her one first-hand experience of massive history (the routing of Confederate troops outside Atlanta; the subsequent burning of the Georgia capital) *and* the domestic consequences of the Union force's 'total war' and 'scorched earth' policies (seen in the catastrophic impact on the fictionalized plantation Tara).[41] Scarlett's transformation, with her concomitant access to the 'masculine' capacity of foresight ('historical gaze'), is expressed partly through the scenes on the hillside overlooking Tara; accompanied by Max Steiner's famous score, these are amongst this most iconic film's most iconic moments.

Before we focus on these moments, and others which illustrate the film's use of the twin poles of 'the decor of history' and 'the spectacular vista', it is necessary to sketch the film's problematic position within the academy:

> The most popular and commercially successful film of all time, embraced by popular historians and journalistic critics while generally reviled by 'serious' scholars and cinephiles, *Gone with the Wind* stands as both a monument to classical Hollywood and a monumental anomaly. It is, for students and scholars of cinema, our proverbial 800-pound gorilla – an oversized nuisance that simply won't go away and an obvious menace to our carefully constructed habitat.[42]

There are numerous reasons why this 'oversized nuisance' is reviled. The film's focus on a feminine subject, its emphasis on lush costuming and its melodramatic style do not fit with the traditional taste cultures of classical film study. However, it also receives relatively short shrift

40 Ibid., pp. 38–9.

41 J.E. Smyth, *Reconstructing American Historical Cinema: from* Cimarron *to* Citizen Kane (Lexington, KT: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), pp. 142–9.

42 Thomas Schatz, 'Introduction', in Allan David Vertrees, *Selznick's Vision:* Gone with the Wind *and Hollywood Filmmaking* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1997), p. ix.

within work on the woman's film, due, in all probability, to its distasteful ideological sympathies: a nostalgic evocation of the antebellum South and an explicitly Southern perspective on the perceived spite of the North, while the characteristically racist representations widespread in 1930s Hollywood are here more historically charged. J.E. Smyth's recent work provides a useful counter-argument to many of these points, and though one may continue to find *Gone with the Wind*'s stance on black Southerners difficult to rehabilitate, Smyth's analysis of the text's complex, female-centred historiographical method is enlightening. Margaret Mitchell's source novel was a work of fiction built upon a mass of historical research, yet it was often dismissed by, or received faint praise from, male historians, partly because of the author's emphasis on the testimony of women left at home during the Civil War.[43] In 1930s US academia, such an approach, coupled with enormous commercial success (the 1936 book was then the best-selling US novel of all time), caused at best distrust, at worst ridicule. Smyth's perspective points to the untenability of Marc Ferro's description of *Gone with the Wind* as illustrative of films 'where history provides the setting' as against those 'whose subject is history'.[44] Such distinctions rest on a fairly narrow sense of what constitutes a historical text and cannot help but privilege understandings of history as occurring in the male domain of politics and battle. *Gone with the Wind*, for all its flaws, is, I feel, unusual in its promotion of a powerful, though complexly 'feminine' subjectivity, and provides a different perspective on the most traumatic period of US history. However, most relevant to the discussion here is how this '800-pound gorilla' menaces the carefully constructed habitat of classical film study because of the latter's failure to acknowledge and incorporate adequately the role of spectacle.

Sobchack's work on the historical epic draws out useful links between the genre's mode of production and its approach to history. For Sobchack, this relationship is 'onomatopoetic': 'the defining characteristics of the Hollywood historical epic translate the sense of temporal *magnitude* and the existential *weight* of being in historical time into visible size and scale and quantity and extravagance'.[45] *Gone with the Wind*'s length endows its heroine's story with the sense of 'the existential *weight* of being in historical time', and the tumultuous events she must survive. In Sobchack's focus on the 'phenomenology' of the epic, this idea of 'existential weight' has the most gravity when one relates it to the experience of sitting in a movie theatre seat for the 'epic' duration of the film. Sobchack's use of onomatopoeia is also evocative for the analysis of the film's aesthetics, including its use of spectacle. For example, while *Gone with the Wind* is not a technological novelty in terms of a physically larger image (Sobchack focuses particularly on the impact of widescreen technologies like Cinerama in postwar epics), its use of colour (in a period in which colour films were still comparatively rare) was certainly a major

43 Smyth, *Reconstructing American Historical Cinema*, pp. 142–9.

44 Ferro, *Cinema and History*, p. 161.

45 Sobchack, '"Surge and splendor"', p. 294.

attraction, and enables particularly rich views of its *quantity* (of extras, for example), its *extravagance* (of costumes, and so on) and its *visible size and scale* (of sets, locations and running time – the film is over three-and-a-half hours long). However, in promoting here a more precise definition of spectacle within historical filmmaking, Sobchack's liberal use of onomatopoeia is useful only up to a point. We are quite commonly accustomed to thinking of all language signification as arbitrary, but one should acknowledge that onomatopoeia is the one case where the relationship between the word and what it designates is not. Thus Sobchack's fairly arbitrary use of onomatopoeia is potentially a problem here. In the absence of a word that expresses, in language, the *visual* echoing of something in the way the sound of the word 'bang' echoes what it signifies ('iconic' perhaps comes close, but it is not quite right for my purposes here), I employ the term 'actualize' to designate the signifying function of particular spectacular moments. Spectacle in *Gone with the Wind* has an *almost* 'onomatopoeic' function because it envisions a change in the character's perspective through particular kinds of vision. That is to say, Scarlett's central place in the spectacle of the early part of the film enacts her 'superficial' and 'narrow' concerns, while her later visual diminishment within a vast spectacular vista *actualizes* the process of her gradual recognition of the enormity and severity of the history in which she is caught up. 'Actualizes' is thus sufficiently precise to be appropriate for describing the particular effect of spectacle in this film, while being open enough to work for the analysis of other kinds of spectacle. For example, one might say that in musicals, tap dancing may 'actualize' our sense of characters working in unison towards a common goal. In the context of my focus on historical films, *Gone with the Wind* is an apposite case because, in the combination of extraordinarily rich mise-en-scene, and the spectacular rendering of vast historical set pieces, the film combines spectacular elements associated with both the 'decor of history' and 'spectacular vistas', and underlines the complex interactions of these concepts. In order to join the spectacle represented by, say, the burning of Atlanta with the more intimate spectacle of costume and decor, one can return to Neale's analysis of *Triumph of the Will*. As I have noted, in Neale's analysis of spectacle, particular emphasis is placed on the inscription of the spectacular look into the film itself: for example, through awestruck spectators within the film world who gaze at the object of spectacle. In order to understand the operation of spectacle in the 'decor'-oriented passages of the film, it is worth outlining Scarlett's place at the centre of a variety of interlocking spectacular looks.

The introduction of Viven Leigh is a classic 'star entrance' in the way it reveals the actress to our waiting eyes. After a text foreword establishing the nostalgic vision of the antebellum South, Brent and Stuart Tarleton (Fred Crane and George Reeves) are shown talking to the

unseen Scarlett about the forthcoming war. Our view of Scarlett is obscured by Brent until, following a track-in, he moves to one side (figure 4). The moment is the logical culmination of Selznick's careful promotion of 'the search for Scarlett O'Hara' (in which the producer pursued the 'most famous talent search in history', constructing Vivien Leigh as the 'discovery'[46]) and, as a filmic gesture, is akin to a master of ceremony's announcement, 'and now, what you've all been waiting for . . .!' Indeed, despite her relative lack of star status prior to this film, this publicity campaign makes it a particularly vivid kind of star entrance because this moment is so heavily weighted as 'the birth of a star'. Furthermore, the theatricality of this moment brings us back to Neale's analysis of *Triumph of the Will*: like the clouds above Nuremberg,[47] the parting of the Tarleton brother resembles a stage curtain.

Fig. 4.
The parting of the Tarleton brothers: a 'theatrical' culmination of the 'search for Scarlett'.

After her signature 'Fiddle-dee-dee', Scarlett admonishes the young men for their boring discussion of war and denies that there will even be one. Instead, Scarlett is concerned with the parties that dominate her existence on the plantation. Scarlett's opening statements provide the starting point in her transition from scopic (and social) 'centre of attention' to our key focus as witness of history's spectacle; I shall return to this, but for now I want to stress her costume and central position in the mise-en-scene. Leigh's wardrobe was clearly a significant cinematic attraction promoted within and without the film,[48] and Robert La Vine has pointed to how the gowns themselves express the character's transformation.[49] Figure 5 is typical of many of the shots which privilege the beauty of her gowns, but Leigh's Scarlett is no unwitting decorative object; instead she consistently exploits her 'to-be-looked-at-ness' as a means of controlling the men around her. Indeed figure 5 captures a particularly theatrical turn (balletic, rather), where the two Tarleton brothers must chase after Scarlett and bring her back with promises of 'no more war talk'.

46 Helen Taylor, *Scarlett's Women: Gone with the Wind and its Female Fans* (London: Virago Press, 1989), p. 83. Here Leigh's 'to-be-looked-at-ness' combines powerfully with O'Hara's 'to-be-found-ness'.

47 Neale, '*Triumph of the Will*', pp. 67–8.

48 Tino Balio, *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1929–1939* (London: University of California Press, 1995), p. 92.

49 Robert W. La Vine, *In a Glamorous Fashion: the Fabulous Years of Hollywood Costume Design* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980), pp. 94–6.

Fig. 5.
The film privileges the beauty of Scarlett's gowns.

In the subsequent party at the Wilkes's family home 'Twelve Oaks' (after Scarlett's manoeuvres, this party becomes the topic of her conversation with the two brothers at the beginning of the film), Scarlett is again placed centrally in the frame and in the attentions of the young male guests. She manages methodically to draw each young man away from his fiancee. Moreover, her entrance to the party offers a particularly theatrical spectacle in which she is in many ways the dominant attraction. Through the use of a track, the camera follows Scarlett as she descends from her carriage. She moves through the crowd until she enters the grand stairwell of the house, the image bursting with lush decor, rich costuming and an excess of movement and colour (figure 6). Looking and display are evoked not only through the movement of the camera and the marked symmetry of the mise-en-scene, but are also inscribed in the dialogue. Scarlett greets the young hostess India Wilkes (Alicia Rhett) with a disingenuous 'What a lovely dress! I just can't take my eyes off it!' and the barest of glances, and it is more than apparent that Scarlett's is the lovelier. A number of young men greet Scarlett with compliments on her appearance, one inscribing the response clearly desired of the viewer, 'You look mighty fine this morning, Miss Scarlett'.

Fig. 6.
Scarlett's entrance to the party.

Of course, as with much period drama (and indeed much melodrama), social appearances are a key theme of the film and a key preoccupation for Scarlett herself. It is only as the narrative continues and history begins to intrude into her life that the heroine is forced to reassess her priorities. As with all historical cinema, we are made to feel historical events are always on the horizon, and Scarlett's denial of the inevitability of civil war and the nostalgic construction of the antebellum South constantly force the viewer to contemplate the inevitable passage of history. A key image in the first half of the film is that of a sundial inscribed with the warning 'Do not squander time'. This introduces a scene of the young Southern belles during their afternoon nap, a scene concurrent with the male characters' discussion of the war. War takes place in the world of men, and it is only when it intrudes into the domestic sphere that the life of women is disturbed.

A moment that illustrates a different kind of spectacle, spectacle of the scope I have defined as the *vista*, comes with the routing of the Southern troops defending Atlanta. With her cousin Melanie (Olivia de Havilland) going into labour, Scarlett goes to find the doctor (Harry Davenport). Venturing into Atlanta, the horror of the scene that greets her is of cataclysmic proportions. Scarlett moves through crowds and the debris of canon fire. She halts, then looks around herself, off-camera (figure 7). There then follows perhaps the film's most expansively spectacular shot. The camera starts on Scarlett in full-shot (figure 8) and cranes upwards and to the left to reveal hundreds, if not thousands of injured Southern soldiers. From being the focus of the camera's attention, Scarlett becomes ever smaller in the frame, until she is barely distinguishable from the legion of extras (figure 9), and then, as the camera finishes its movement, she disappears behind a tattered confederate flag (figure 10): this shot lasts fifty-three seconds. At such moments of historical spectacle, Scarlett is transformed from the object of our attention to a figure cueing our appreciation of history at its most massive, most spectacular. Scarlett's absorption into the crowd actualizes an individual's submission to events greater than themselves, and its spectacular affect (awe, a sense of overwhelming scale) underscores this. It is a kind of spectacle (the vista) that 'actualizes' this signification: the term is also useful because one may consider its relationship to 'acting' or 'acting out'. In figure 7, Vivien Leigh acts out her recognition of the enormity of the vista which she sees around her. The subsequent crane shot spectacularly actualizes her diminishment, a diminishment that has a profound effect on her character.

Fig. 7 (left).
Scarlett looks around herself with awe and fear.

Fig. 8 (right).
A crane shot dramatizes the 'spectacular vista'. Scarlett goes from centre of attention . . .

Fig. 9 (left).
. . . to a tiny figure barely distinguishable from her surroundings . . .

Fig. 10 (right).
. . . until she disappears behind a signifier of the South's 'gallant' destruction.

Much of this discussion has been oriented around questions of vision, which brings the discussion back to the 'historical gaze'. The gendering of the historical gaze is illustrated at particular points of *Gone with the Wind*. Clark Gable's Rhett Butler represents a rougher, more aggressively sexual masculinity than had been prevalent in much of 1930s cinema and his sexual potency is demonstrated in the gaze with which he fixes Scarlett (figure 11), a gaze presented as scandalous within the rigid etiquette and courtship rituals of 1850s Georgia. However, his mastery of historical foresight also contributes significantly to his potency. While the women nap during the Twelve Oaks party, the men congregate in the study to discuss the impending war. Butler offends the empty chauvinism of the younger men by hinting at the inevitability of a Union victory. As a visitor to the North, Butler knows of its vastly superior industrial and military resources and its possession of a navy big enough 'to bottle up our harbours and starve us to death'. Thus Butler voices historical details known to many American viewers of the 1930s. Furthermore, it is this foresight that enables Butler to make a fortune from the war as a gun-runner. This may make him something of an anti-hero, but only adds to the qualities that ultimately seduce Scarlett. It should also be noted that the antebellum Southern man against whom Butler is counterposed is often a rather feminized figure; one need only think of the recurring historical stereotype of the Southern dandy, whose representation in US cinema hints at a distrust of 'aristocratic' notions of decorum and display. The kind of decor of history associated with such figures can be contrasted with the more virile, masculine spectacle of the vista, the kind of spectacle King might be said to privilege, and which he links to the American frontier[50] – this formative myth was often used to transcend the divisive history of the Civil War.

50 King. *Spectacular Narratives.*

Fig. 11.
Butler (Clark Gable) stares at Scarlett.

Scarlett begins the film as Butler's opposite in terms of foresight. Amongst women who are not encouraged to worry about matters as large as war, she is the one most preoccupied with parties: theatres in which she practises her own form of veiled combat. While strong men are defined by their ability to plan for the future, Scarlett is busy only with social concerns in her present. This is clearly demonstrated in the film's opening scene, in her steadfast denial of the inevitability of the war and her preoccupation with the politics of dances and dresses. This lack of foresight is also underlined in the first of the three scenes on top of the hill overlooking Tara. In the first instance, only ten minutes into the film, she stands there with her father (Thomas Mitchell) who warmly scolds her for her claim that the plantation does not matter: 'Land is the only thing worth working for, worth fighting for, worth dying for, because it's the only thing that lasts!' He tells her in his warm Irish brogue, 'To anyone with a drop of Irish blood in them, the land they live on is like their mother'. At this, he makes a sweeping gesture with his arm and the camera cuts to a shot craning back from the two figures silhouetted against the Tara sunset (figure 12 comes at the end of the shot). Before the famous theme tune fills the soundtrack, the father is heard promising Scarlett, 'But you're just a child! It will come to you, this love of the land.'

The second hilltop scene comes at the end of Part One of the film, after Scarlett has fled Atlanta, where she witnesses the most devastating historical vistas of the film. Not only do these scenes form the most traditionally spectacular sequence of the film, the burning of Atlanta occupied a central place in Selznick's promotion of the film as the greatest spectacular ever made. The filming of the scene kicked off the production of the film, and every Technicolor camera then in existence was used to film the enormous fire started on the back lot of RKO (figure 13).[51] Butler helps her escape the devastation and respects her determination to go home to Tara. However, what she finds there is similarly barren: her mother dead, and her father driven insane by grief. The latter's emasculation is underlined when he tries to comfort her by

51 Schatz, 'Introduction', p. x.

Fig. 12.
Scarlett disinterestedly surveys Tara with her father (Thomas Mitchell).

Fig. 13.
Selznick's promotion also built anticipation for the spectacular burning of Atlanta.

saying they must go and talk to Mrs O'Hara, and then admonishes her, 'Go out for a ride, I'm busy', as he returns to his meaningless paperwork. Realizing she is effectively alone, Scarlett leaves and climbs the hill as the sun starts to rise. Having collapsed to the ground, she drags herself up and, facing the camera in closeup, promises, 'If I have to lie, beg, steal or kill, as God is my witness, I will never go hungry again!'. The camera pulls back to give a reverse image of the shot that ended the previous hilltop scene. Thus Scarlett ends Part One of the film having accepted what her father had earlier foreseen; she realizes she must embrace the land if she is to provide for herself and her family, and her language is determined in its concern for the future ('I will . . .'). Indeed, Part Two of the film begins with her and her sisters ploughing the land, and with Scarlett slapping one of them for complaining at the backbreaking work. Through bitter experience, Scarlett has acquired resolution and foresight, and a historical gaze coded as masculine. However, in Part Two, the emotional hardening that this process has entailed will result in an ever more tempestuous relationship with Butler.

Part Two covers Scarlett's return to a reconstructed Atlanta, her business success and her eventual marriage to Rhett Butler. After the death of their daughter, she is abandoned for the second time by a strong patriarchal figure with Rhett's oft-quoted, 'Frankly my dear, I don't give

a damn'. She collapses on the stairs of her Atlanta mansion, and the voices of characters throughout the film are heard talking of Tara. We hear her father's words again, 'Land's the only thing that matters; it's the only thing that lasts'. A cacophony of voices call out 'Tara' and Scarlett gradually raises her head. In closeup she looks past the camera, and says, 'Yes, I'll go home and think of some way to win him back. . . . After all, tomorrow is another day!' (figure 14). The music builds on the soundtrack, and in a shot almost identical to an earlier image, Scarlett is silhouetted, again facing towards Tara, but this time alone (figure 15).

Fig. 14.
'After all, tomorrow is another day!' The voices of Tara call her back.

Fig. 15.
In contrast with fig. 12, Scarlett is now the sole mistress of Tara.

The gaze in such instances is no longer historical in the same way as Louis Pasteur's gaze into the future of medicine or young Mr Lincoln's into the future destruction and reunification of America, but the correspondence is, I hope, clear. In a film with the vistas of *Gone with the Wind*, the historical gaze and its objects are themselves spectacular. Though we must be careful to discuss spectacle in visual terms, Max Steiner's music is certainly crucial to underlining the spectacular affect of the three hilltop scenes. Other dimensions are the scale of the image,

the colours, and even the clouds (see especially figure 12). Indeed, Neale cites the work of Hubert Damisch, who argues that 'clouds have been an essential ingredient in the whole apparatus of spectacle in European art':

> In offering to the spectator's gaze a set of forms which mask and fill an otherwise empty and potentially infinite space (the sky) while simultaneously signifying the emptiness and infinity that they mask, clouds have come to function, in a sense, to signify spectacle itself.[52]

52 Neale, '*Triumph of the Will*', p. 67.

The function of clouds to signify infinity and emptiness can also be linked to the very openness of *Gone with the Wind*'s ending, in which Scarlett climbs the hill once more and avows her determination to win Rhett back. As we have seen, this open ending has been prefigured by the repeated scenes on the hill. According to Helen Taylor's innovative audience research on the film, the openness of the ending was a major attraction to the film's vast female audience,[53] and can be seen to challenge 'the importance of closure and resolution in classic narrative'.[54] (The unanswered question, 'will Scarlett and Rhett be reunited?', allows the outcome to be imagined by the readers and viewers of the book and film.) This is not the only way such moments challenge still prevalent assumptions about classic narrative, for, in their reliance on spectacle, they point to an expanded and expansive vocabulary of spectacular effects. One could certainly discuss the moments on the hill purely in terms of melodrama, a mode (or genre, as the debate goes) which is often defined partly in relation to questions of characters' insight/awareness (or rather lack of these) of their situation. Melodrama and melodramatic performance are also often characterized by an emotionally charged gaze into space (figure 14 can certainly be understood in these terms). However, why need there be a conflict here, as *Gone with the Wind* is probably the most famous *spectacular melodrama* of all time? Future work might consider the particular function of spectacle within melodrama, as it is the underlying contention of this essay that we need to better understand the particular operations of what we call 'spectacle' in different kinds of filmmaking.

53 Taylor, *Scarlett's Women*, pp. 140–67.

54 Pam Cook and Mieke Bernink (eds), *The Cinema Book*, second edition (London: British Film Institute, 1999), p. 368.

I have posited here a number of different terms for the description and analysis of important elements within historical films. To conclude, it is worth stressing their interrelationship. I have suggested that the historical gaze is illustrative of the wider concern of historical films to address the historical knowledge of the film spectator and stress the fortitude and foresight of strong men in shaping the course of history. Consequently, Scarlett O'Hara's development into a strong and powerful woman is partly expressed through the rhetoric of foresight. The hilltop scenes may not express her determination in relation to history *per se*, but their increased determination and address to a personal future is shown to be partly a result of Scarlett's experience of 'the spectacular [historical] vista'. In so lavish and epic a film as *Gone with the Wind*, these rhetorical moments of foresight are themselves made spectacular. These classic 'vistas' are in this case related to masculine discourses oriented around

the ownership of property (it is her father who, in the first hilltop scene, points to the significance of land, and specifically the Tara plantation visible below) and 'the historical gaze' itself. In this sense, *Gone with the Wind* reveals a much wider gendering of spectacle.

I have defined the two poles most relevant to the historical film as 'the decor of history' and 'the spectacular vista'. The decor of history's association with the domestic sphere (however grand) and the concomitant visual pleasures of interior decoration, furnishings (set dressing) and costume tie it to the world of women. In *Gone with the Wind*, this is used to express a nostalgia for a doomed historical space/moment (antebellum Georgia) and a feminine sphere in which traditional gender roles discourage women from attending to more profound issues outside of their present. The spectacular vista, on the other hand, is classically the expression of male history (wars, battles; one might add the emphasis on strong-willed men in the settling of the American frontier, vivified, sometimes 'actualized' through classic Western images of Monument Valley). All this does not deny Scarlett's potency as a feminine subject; it only points to the complex, interlinking ways in which cinema has figured such potency as, at least, an accommodation to more masculine qualities.

Maximum movies: Lawrence Alloway's pop art film criticism

PETER STANFIELD

Lawrence Alloway (1926–90) established his reputation as a critic during his time as part of the Independent Group, a loose-knit collective of artists and intellectuals who met at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London during the early to mid 1950s. Members of the Group included Reyner Banham, Richard Hamilton, John McHale, Toni del Renzio, Eduardo Paolozzi, and Alison and Peter Smithson-pioneers of critical and artistic engagement with industrial and popular arts.[1] In 1950s austerity Britain, their interest in the visual qualities of American popular arts and the championing of an industrial culture constituted an act of provocation guaranteed to upset cultivated sensibilities. Their iconoclastic disregard for both classical aesthetics and high modernism, and regard for cultures of consumption and the aesthetics of plenty, have long been held by art, design and architectural historians as a significant intervention into postwar artistic practice and cultural debate. Yet their ideas on popular art's ephemerality and expendability, on production cycles and seriality, on standardization and modification, on the intensification of conventions, on creative collaboration and the specialized knowledge held by consumers, have received only passing interest from film scholars.

Of all the members of the Independent Group who considered the movies an important link in the arts and communications continuum with which they were engaged, Alloway alone developed a coherent theory of film as a popular art. Throughout the 1960s he published a small number of critical pieces on American cinema; work that culminated in 1969 with a programme of American action movies at New York's Museum of Modern Art.[2] His notes for the screenings were expanded and then published by

1 For an overview of the work and legacy of the Independent Group, see Anne Massey, *The Independent Group: Modernism and Mass Culture in Britain, 1945–59* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), and David Robbins and Jacquelyn Baas (eds), *The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990).

2 See, for example: 'Monster films', *Encounter* (January 1960), pp. 70–72; 'Lawrence Alloway on the iconography of the movies', *Movie* (February 1963), pp. 16–18; 'Critics in the dark', *Encounter* (February 1964), pp. 50–55; 'Son of public enemy', *Arts Magazine* (November 1966), pp. 25–6; 'Science fiction and artifacts', *Arts Magazine* (December 1968), pp. 39–41; 'More skin, more everything in movies', *Vogue*, 1 February 1968, pp. 186–7, p. 213. For an overview of Alloway's career as a museum and gallery curator, see Alex Coles, 'Curating: then and now', *Art Monthly*, no. 275 (2004), pp. 1–4.

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MOMA in 1971 as *Violent America: the Movies, 1946–1964*.[3] This monograph contains five essays, which consider the issues of realism, expendability, iconography, the industrial context of film production and a fulsome rejection of the catharsis theory of violence and the arts.

At the time of their original release, most of the thirty-five films screened in the MOMA programme were inconspicuous genre pictures, though they are now some of the most valued and analyzed examples of American filmmaking. Titles included *Out of the Past* (1947), *The Big Heat* (1953), *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955), *Written on the Wind* (1956), *Touch of Evil* (1958), *Seven Men From Now* (1956), *Steel Helmet* (1951) and *In a Lonely Place* (1950).[4] The programme was not intended to offer critical and institutional validation of individual films, or to proclaim a particular film as a distinctive work of American art, worthy of the cultural esteem that might follow a screening at one of New York's premier art establishments. Instead, Alloway sought to understand American iconography better by examining the popular arts in the context of the culture in which they were produced and consumed. This was a project with which he had been engaged for some time.

The core of Alloway's theory of the popular arts was first presented in his article 'The long front of culture'. Published in *Cambridge Opinion* in 1959, the essay undermined readymade assumptions about cultural hierarchies, dismantled the idea that the arts were the exclusive possession of an elite, and that permanence and uniqueness should be the criteria by which we judge the value of material culture:

> These 'keepers of the flame' master a central (not too large) body of cultural knowledge, mediate in it, and pass it on intact (possibly a little enlarged) to the children of the elite. However, mass production techniques, applied to accurately repeatable words, pictures, and music, have resulted in an expendable multitude of signs and symbols. To approach this exploding field with Renaissance-based ideas of the uniqueness of art is crippling.[5]

Acceptance of the popular arts entailed a shift in the notion of what was understood to be culture. As an art critic, Alloway was not just interested in the ostensible object of study, but also in its immediate context, and, in particular, the role it had in facilitating communication between the various groups from which society is formed. He wanted to consider advertising, the movies, comic books, magazines, television and pop music on equal terms with the fine arts – not the same, but of equal interest. Alloway presented an inclusive view of modern culture, in which 'the new role for the fine arts is to be one of the possible forms of communication in an expanding framework that includes the mass arts'.[6] Then, he argued, 'unique oil paintings and highly personal poems as well as mass-distributed films and group-aimed magazines can be placed within a continuum rather than frozen in layers in a pyramid'.[7]

Assigning equal value to the elite and popular arts did not mean that differences went unrecognized. The popular arts are defined by their

3 Lawrence Alloway, *Violent America: the Movies 1946–1964* (New York, NY: MOMA, 1971), p. 9.

4 The complete screening programme was as follows: *The Killers* (1946), *Desert Fury* (1947), *I Walk Alone* (1947), *Out of the Past* (1947), *Ramrod* (1947), *The Lady from Shanghai* (1948), *D.O.A.* (1949), *Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949), *White Heat* (1949), *In a Lonely Place* (1950), *The Steel Helmet* (1951), *The Big Heat* (1953), *Hondo* (1953), *The Naked Spur* (1953), *Pickup on South Street* (1953), *Suddenly* (1954), *House of Bamboo* (1955), *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955), *The Phoenix City Story* (1955), *Attack!* (1956), *Backlash* (1956), *The Last Wagon* (1956), *Seven Men from Now* (1956), *Written on the Wind* (1956), *Man in the Shadow* (1957), *The Tall T* (1957), *The Tattered Dress* (1957), *The Case Against Brooklyn* (1958), *The Left Handed Gun* (1958), *The Lineup* (1958), *Touch of Evil* (1958), *Warlock* (1959), *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), *Johnny Cool* (1963), *The Killers* (1964).

5 Lawrence Alloway, 'The long front of culture', in *Cambridge Opinion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), pp. 25–6. Reprinted in Alloway, *Imagining the Present* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), pp. 61–4.

6 Ibid., p. 58.

7 Ibid.

topicality; hence they are marked by transience and obsolescence as much as they are by immediacy and the present. Repetition and change are key features, 'geared to technical changes which occur, not gradually, but violently and experimentally'.[8] Redundancy rather than permanence is one of the defining factors, but this does not make the popular arts any less interesting than an accepted work of art; ephemerality is precisely what makes commercial culture arresting.

Alloway's reputation as a critic rests primarily on the fact that he was the first in print to use the term 'pop art', a term which he readily applied to the movies in the late 1950s and early 1960s. By the time he reset his ideas for inclusion in *Violent America*, the term 'pop art' had vanished from his movie criticism. His critical method had not changed, but the currency of pop art had. When he first deployed the term in 1957/8 he had meant it as a description of mass communications:

> It was an expansionist esthetics, aimed at relating art to the man-made environment of the 50's. Advertising, color photography and color reproduction, (big screen) films, (early English) TV, automobile styling were regarded on equal terms with the fine arts; not the same, but equally interesting.[9]

The British proponents of pop art were, he noted, accused of being pro-American, but this was to conflate industrialization with the USA. All technologically advanced nations produce industrial art, but because the USA was the most fully realized industrial nation it was producing the most admired pop art:

> Pop art was pro-urban and accepted the media's roots in mass production, at a time when traditional esthetics in England was mostly pastoral or universalizing. Pop art, in its original form, was a polemic against elite views of art in which uniqueness is a metaphor of the aristocratic and contemplation the only proper response to art.[10]

As understood by the Independent Group, and articulated by artist John McHale, the new media landscape of the 1950s represented an acceleration of everyday life which required 'an array of symbolic images of man which will match up to the requirements of constant change, fleeting impression, and a high rate of obsolescence. A replaceable, expendable series of icons.'[11] Initially, then, pop art was this series of short-lived, interchangeable, images. 'Its users were art-oriented', wrote Alloway, 'if not themselves artists, and interested both in extending esthetic attention to the mass media and in absorbing mass-media material within the context of fine art.'[12] Writing to fellow Independent Group members Peter and Alison Smithson in 1957, artist Richard Hamilton sketched out a table of pop art's characteristics:

> Popular (designed for a mass audience)
> Transient (short-term solution)
> Expendable (easily forgotten)

8 Lawrence Alloway, 'The arts and mass media', *Architectural Design*, vol. 28, no. 2 (1958), pp. 84–5, reprinted in Alloway, *Imagining the Present*, pp. 55–9.

9 Lawrence Alloway, 'Pop art: the words', in *Topics in American Art Since 1945* (New York, NY: Norton, 1975), pp. 119–22.

10 Ibid., p. 119.

11 John McHale 'The expendable icon', I and II, *Architectural Design*, vol. 29, nos 2 and 3 (February–March 1959), republished in Mark Francis (ed.), *POP* (London: Phaidon, 2005), pp. 201–2.

12 Alloway, *Topics in American Art*, p. 119.

Low cost
Mass produced
Young (aimed at youth)
Witty
Sexy
Gimmicky
Glamorous
Big business[13]

From 1961 to 1964 the meaning of pop art shifted, according to Alloway, to privilege the idea that it represented 'art that included a reference to mass-media sources'. Between1965 and 1966 the meaning again shifted and pop was now applied to 'fashion, films, interior decoration, toys, parties and town planning'.[14] Pop art, then, moves from an aesthetics of consumer goods, through the appropriation of the iconography of consumption by fine artists, to this new art's doubling-back into consumer culture. Alloway illustrated how the term's mobility mitigated against its original meaning by drawing upon the history of Batman, which began as a comic strip, and then became a subject of painting, before becoming the camp hit television series that proclaimed a self-awareness of its own 'pop art' status. 'Pop art' can no longer represent a sense of the wider culture where Batman and fine art coexist as equally interesting but distinct media. Nevertheless, Alloway insisted, the original project begun by the Independent Group to make 'a descriptive account of the whole field of communications, in which we live and which art is a part' remained valid. If he felt the term itself was now redundant due to the shifts in meaning that it had undergone, Alloway still practised a pop art criticism which he understood to be inclusive and speculative, showing a healthy distrust of the elitist disposition towards formalist and contemplative aesthetics.[15]

Other members of the Independent Group shared Alloway's anti-elitism. In 1960 Reyner Banham had written:

> Both the designer and critic must be in close touch with the dynamics of mass-communication. The critic, especially, must have the ability to sell the public to the manufacturer, the courage to speak out in face of academic hostility, the knowledge to decide where, when and to what extent the standards of the popular arts are preferable to those of the fine arts. He must project the future dreams and desires of people as one who speaks from within their ranks. It is only thus that he can participate in the extraordinary adventure of mass-production, which counters the old aristocratic and defeatist nineteenth-century slogan, 'Few, but roses', and its implied corollary, 'Multitudes are weeds', with a new slogan that cuts across all academic categories: 'Many, because orchids'.[16]

Banham's critical position sits well alongside that of Alloway, who, in his introduction to *Violent America*, wrote that the

13 Republished in Francis (ed.), *POP*, p. 198.

14 Alloway, *Topics in American Art*, p. 121.

15 Ibid., p. 122.

16 Reyner Banham, 'Epitaph machine aesthetic', *Industrial Design*, vol. 7 (March 1960), pp. 45–58, republished in Francis (ed.), *POP*, pp. 203–4.

> proper point of departure for a film critic who is going to write about the movies is membership in the large audience for whom they are intended. You need to be in the target area, whereas the majority of film reviewers write as a hostile minority interested primarily in works that are above obsolescence.[17]

Writing at the beginning of 1964, Alloway called for a descriptive criticism of film that would account for popular cinema's 'specific kind of communication (high impact, strong participation, hard to remember), or in the technology and organization through which the movies reach us'.[18] His article incited a biting critique from Pauline Kael, and a lengthy riposte from Andrew Sarris:

> Alloway transforms what is too frequently a dismal fact into a visionary ideal. Badness and banality become sociological virtues; familiarity breeds contentment. This is not the attitude of the true movie addict who is too experienced to like everything he sees, but more the rationale of condescending content awareness without any deep commitment to formal excellence.[19]

Sarris's critique that Alloway sought to affirm the banal at the cost of seeking out the exceptional is something of a caricature of Alloway's claim on our attention. His working methods embraced the movies as an industrial *art*, giving due analytical weight to modes of repetition and standardization, against which innovation and novelty can be recognized. Aesthetic evaluation is concerned with the process and form of seriality, not individual excellence. This does not mean that Alloway is setting out to celebrate formulaic art for formulaic art's sake. He did not strive for a genre theory that searches for an ideal against which to make judgements. Instead he argued for an approach that examined production cycles, runs and sets. These are groups of films that are recognized by filmmakers and audiences alike, but are too often overlooked by critics searching for the next masterpiece. Sarris's response was to suggest Alloway had constructed a simple opposition between modernity and antiquity:

> The fallacy of an all-wise antiquity is replaced by the fallacy of an all-meaning modernity. The nostalgic yearning for hand-woven linen handkerchiefs is ridiculed in order to worship the efficiency and expendability of Kleenex. This is part of the mystique of pop art, and there is a great deal to be said for its frank recognition of technological change. You may not like Campbell's Soup cans, but it is futile to pretend you still pick herbs in Arcady where the new housing project is located.[20]

Sarris seeks to evaluate individual films: 'I still cling to the illusion of visual craftsmanship transformed by the alchemy of projection and the mystique of *mise–en–scène* into the highest form of personal creation'.[21] Alloway did not recognize this division between art and

17 Alloway, *Violent America*, p. 19.

18 Alloway, 'Critics in the dark', pp. 50–55.

19 Andrew Sarris, 'Pop go the movies!', in *The Primal Screen: Essays on Film and Related Subjects* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1972), pp. 66–80; originally published in *Moviegoer*, vol. 2 (Summer/Autumn 1964). Kael's critique forms the conclusion of her introduction to *I Lost it at the Movies* (New York NY: Little, Brown, 1965), pp. 26–7. Other reviews of Alloway's film writings include: Max Kozloff, 'Violent America', *Artforum*, vol. 10 (June 1972), pp. 65–7; Sidney Rosenzweig, 'The dark night of the screen: messages and melodrama in the American movie', *American Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 1 (1975), pp. 88–98.

20 Sarris, 'Pop go the movies!', p. 69.

21 Ibid., p. 75.

commerce as valuable to the critic: 'Movies, in their high topicality, intense participatory appeal, playful expertise, and freedom from a desire to encumber the future with monuments, can be regarded as continuing the tradition of expendable art'.[22] Furthermore, he argued, critics have been 'reluctant to situate the cinema within a field of popular culture and industrialization', and have, therefore, been unable to discuss film in terms of its 'temporal function or span of usability'. Ephemeral art, Alloway stressed, can and should be taken as seriously as the 'presumptively permanent'.

In her 1996 essay 'Americanitis: European intellectuals and Hollywood melodrama', Laura Mulvey revisited her own history as a film scholar in the context of an emerging film studies culture, discussing in particular the fascination with Hollywood exhibited by the 1960s generation of cinephiles. American film, she wrote, was

> energetic and cathartic, a cinema of the machine age, streamlined and commodified, able to produce and repeat successful formulas, stories or stars, as Detroit might produce motor cars. This cinema stood in direct opposition to high cultural values encrusted with the weight and authority of tradition. European intellectuals took up American cinema partly in a spirit of political polemics with the traditions and values of their own culture.[23]

Mulvey was part of a group of film critics and scholars who sought to revitalize British film culture by establishing the importance of studying American genre films. Inspired by French film criticism and Sarris's adoption of *la politique des auteurs*, auteurism became the dominant critical position taken by British cinephiles. However, this path to a critical evaluation of American movies was not the only route available. The work of Alloway and his colleagues in the Independent Group suggested an alternative means of critical engagement, one that forged a link between Hollywood and Detroit.

Despite Mulvey's rumination suggesting otherwise, film as an industrial art did not become part of an emerging film studies agenda. Film scholars tended to have a background in literary studies and a shared ambition to establish the serious study of American cinema through identifying distinctive films. This pushed the debate on *commercial film as art* away from an analysis that situated Hollywood as industrial producer of formulaic goods, albeit goods that are marked by a high degree of individual distinction, towards an evaluation of American film which, Alloway argued, 'appropriated popular movies as if they were found objects removed from their original context and assigned lavish and arbitrary significance'.[24] The overarching critical move, then, was towards a formal and contemplative accounting of individual movies that Alloway considered to be at odds with the design and function of an industrial art. Individual films, he believed, were less important than the run of film production in which they existed. American film's 'formal

22 Alloway, *Violent America*, pp. 33–4.

23 Laura Mulvey, *Fetishism and Curiosity* (London: British Film Institute, 1996), pp. 19–28.

24 Alloway, *Violent America*, p. 12.

elaboration and thematic complexity' will only be revealed, he argued, by looking within and across film cycles.

Among the film scholars whose work shared a number of concerns with Alloway were Jim Kitses and Colin McArthur, two mainstays of the British film culture community that developed around Paddy Whannel and the British Film Institute in the 1960s.[25] In his 1972 book *Underworld USA*, McArthur's stated aim was to show:

> That the supposed constraints on the artist working within a commercial/industrial structure such as Hollywood may be better described as disciplines. The necessity of working within narrative and genre, with prescribed stars, a strong producer's hand and forceful collaborators, may lead not to a diminution but to an intensification of the artefact's force and range through the ironing out of its purely coterie elements. The argument could be extended to suggest that the necessity of working within fixed budgets and shooting schedules has decisively shaped the style and therefore the meaning of certain artists' work.[26]

Don Siegel is presented as the exemplar of the *auteur de genre*, but McArthur also covers the crime films of Fritz Lang, John Huston, Jules Dassin, Robert Siodmak, Elia Kazan, Nicholas Ray, Samuel Fuller and Jean-Pierre Melville, alongside short pieces on the background, development and iconography of the crime film genre. The overlap with Alloway's work is clear: the emphasis on the iconography of crime as it is deployed across time and within discrete runs of films, the focus on the postwar cycles and subsets of crime films, particularly those films marked by an intensification of generic markers. But the distinctions between their approaches are crucial; McArthur's recognition of the role of genre as 'disciplining' the auteur is used on the understanding that it enables a modification of auteurist criticism to allow him to engage in a more profound evaluation of individual films.[27] Despite McArthur's call on the determining role of genre on certain films and directors, his objective is to isolate examples and individuals, to define the best that is on offer.

Alloway was not immune to recognizing the role of a director in determining a particular movie's appeal, but as he wrote in his MOMA programme notes for *Pick Up On South Street* (Samuel Fuller, 1953): 'This series is not primarily devoted to directors; the underlying assumption is that the popular film is susceptible to a number of shaping influences. The producer, the writer, the persona of a star, may contribute decisively to a movie, either singly or collectively'.[28] Jim Kitses's book *Horizons West* cut a similar path to McArthur's, advancing the idea of filmmakers working within an 'American *tradition*', and insisting that the conventions of the form are a 'gift' provided for its practitioners.[29] *Horizons West* is subtitled 'studies of authorship *within* the Western' (my italics). Kitses wrote: 'The model we must hold before us is of a varied and flexible structure, a thematically fertile and ambiguous world of

25 The politics and key figures at the BFI in the 1960s and 1970s are discussed in Colin McArthur, 'Two steps forward, one step back: cultural struggle in the British Film Institute', *Journal of Popular British Cinema*, no. 4 (2001), pp. 112–27.

26 Colin McArthur, *Underworld USA* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1972), p. 150.

27 Ibid., p. 161.

28 MOMA programme notes, *Pick Up On South Street*.

29 Jim Kitses, *Horizons West* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969), p. 8.

historical material shot through with archetypal elements which are themselves ever in flux.'[30] Kitses's ideas on genre match well with Alloway's thoughts on how one might chart recurrent and changing motifs in the movies, and though his study is focused on a particular generic form, it does not preclude a more expansive set of concerns, an idea supported by his (and McArthur's) interest in a structural approach to genre study. Kitses, then, was looking to find a balance between individual achievement and structural conventions:

> The Western is not just the men who have worked within it. Rather than an empty vessel breathed into by the film-maker, the genre is a vital structure through which flow a myriad of themes and concepts. As such the form can provide a director with a range of possible connections and the space in which to experiment, to shape and refine the kind of effects and meanings he is working towards. We must be prepared to entertain the idea that auteurs grow, and that genre can help to crystallize preoccupations and contribute actively to development.[31]

Kitses's study considered the Western films of Anthony Mann, Budd Boetticher and Sam Peckinpah. The films of these directors all have a place within Alloway's book:

> During the 40s and 50s a new generation of directors appeared, among them Robert Aldrich, Budd Boetticher, Delmer Daves, Edward Dmytryk, Samuel Fuller, Anthony Mann, Nicholas Ray and Donald Siegel. These men had in common the fact that they accepted the overall conventions of action movies but transformed the handling of violence from within: greater intensity and greater naturalism developed simultaneously.[32]

Alloway, however, also showed how easy it is to rip apart the certainties of auteurist critiques, noting what happens when you reconfigure groups of films according to the filmography of, for example, a producer:

> Between 1950 and 1958 . . . Aaron Rosenberg, made eight Westerns: *Winchester 73* [1950], *Bend of the River* [1952], *The Man From the Alamo* [1953], *The Far Country* [1954], *Man Without a Star* [1955], *Backlash* [1956], *Night Passage* [1957], and *The Badlanders* [1958]. Here the directors are Anthony Mann (the first two), Budd Boetticher, Mann again, King Vidor, John Sturges, James Neilson and Delmer Daves.[33]

Despite the different directors, the films all share a common set of concerns, so that it would be easy to ascribe, for example, the figure of the tormented hero to the shaping influence of Rosenberg rather than to Mann. Or perhaps screenwriter Borden Chase is the key influence, producing the scripts for *Winchester 73*, *Bend of the River*, *The Far Country*, *Man Without a Star*, *Backlash* and *Night Passage*.

30 Ibid., p. 19.

31 Ibid., p. 27.

32 Alloway, *Violent America*, p. 26.

33 Ibid., pp. 26–7.

Alloway's critique of the compulsion to connect 'one work' with 'one man' found its surest focus in the films ascribed to Boetticher, specifically the Westerns starring Randolph Scott, which, he argued, become much more meaningful (and complicated) when the collaborative nature of filmmaking is recognized:

> 'Boetticher's earlier and later history as a director, though he is popular with auteur-oriented critics, shows that he operated within this flexible group with a coherence that he has not achieved outside it. The film critic is faced with continually changing alliances of talent rather than with simple pyramids of personal authority.[34]

Alloway does not deny the agency of individuals, as is clear from his interest in Fuller, for instance, but he is concerned with the collective endeavours of filmmaking operating within an industrial context. Mapping these shifting alliances becomes a key activity for the critic.[35]

In his 1973 review of the impact of auteur theory on the study of film, Ed Buscombe came to a very similar conclusion: 'The test of a theory is whether it produces new knowledge. The auteur theory produced much, but of a very partial kind, and much it left totally unknown.' Asking how things might move forward, he outlined three areas with which film studies needs to engage: the effect of cinema on society; the effect of society on cinema; the effect of films on other films. This, he argues,

> would especially involve questions of genre, which only means that some films have a *very* close relation to other films. But all films are affected by the previous history of the cinema. This is only one more thing that traditional *auteur* theory could not cope with. It identified the code of the *auteur*; but was silent on those codes intrinsic to the cinema, as well as those originating outside it.[36]

If the critic is then to evaluate the movies, it is essential that they also understand that the 'routine of movie-going is . . . the base of any criticism of popular movies'.[37] The movies are an industrial product produced for a mass audience, and therefore the study of popular film demands that the critic recognize that films do not stand alone, but are produced and consumed in runs and sets; groupings that may be understood in terms of generic qualities, or the casting of stars, or shared iconographical elements. Rather than the discrete film, the continuities across groups of films, which the audience recognizes, become the principal focus of critical attention. 'The primary object of study is not the single film, the "found object"', wrote Alloway, nor is it, despite the fashion of the day, the director/auteur: 'the underlying assumption is that the popular film is susceptible to a number of shaping influences'.[38] Alloway's argument with auteurism continued:

> Our reflex homage to personal originality too often makes us dismiss as aesthetically negligible a formulaic film that may be an interesting,

34 Ibid., pp. 5–6.

35 'Samuel Fuller is an exception in this series (Orson Welles is another) as a director who is in total control of his genre material. . . . Fuller's style is sharp and insistent: his camera does not record events so much as hit them, in pushy close-up, in incisive groups, in jarring sequence.' MOMA programme notes, *Pick Up On South Street.*

36 Ed Buscombe, 'Ideas of authorship', *Screen*, vol. 14, no. 3 (1973), pp. 75–85.

37 Alloway, *Violent America*, p. 19.

38 MOMA programme notes, *Pick Up On South Street.*

valid, even original development within the convention. Internal, successive modification of forms rather than the display of individual control is a governing principle of popular culture.[39]

39 Alloway, *Violent America*, p. 60.

While recognizing the valuable contribution an auteurist approach can bring in revealing recurring factors and creative endeavours, Alloway warned that 'nuanced discrimination' risked becoming a display of 'esoteric expertise' rather than a meaningful critical endeavour:

> Science fiction, for instance, has a body of expert opinion which is authoritative within the field, but unknown and unusable outside it. Detective stories have connoisseurs who, like Anthony Boucher, can praise Michael Innes for his Henry Jamesian subtlety. Now that is fine, inside the field; the other specialists get the point, and it makes sense if decoded properly. Girlie magazine fanatics can tell one model from another and compare one costume, or lack of it, with another. The risk for film criticism is that the canon of individual authorship, applied to an expendable art form, will simply lead to the insulation of criticism within a kind of hobbies-corner specialism. Then the criticism of pop films might become technical and esoteric, like the cult of Hi Fi, or like surfing in the United States.[40]

40 Ibid., p. 55.

Alloway concluded that what is needed is a 'criticism of movies as a pop art which can have a critical currency beyond that of footnotes and preposterous learning'.[41]

41 Ibid.

Central to Alloway's criticism is the understanding that film is an obsolescent art form: expendable, inherently ephemeral and largely forgettable. However, Alloway argued, in terms of 'continuing themes and motifs, the obsolescence of single films is compensated for by the prolongation of ideas in film after film'.[42] Hence, a film critic's 'judgments derive from the sympathetic consumption of a great many films'.[43] The concept of film as an obsolescent art was crucial to Alloway's aesthetic, it was an idea he had worked out in tandem in the mid 1950s with Reyner Banham and other members of the Independent Group. Banham proposed that consumer demand, changing technology and taste led to an Expendable Aesthetic: 'The addition of the word *expendable* to the vocabulary of criticism was essential before . . . [popular culture] could be faced honestly, since this is the first quality of an object to be consumed'.[44] Furthermore, there was little point in claiming that mass-produced objects followed the classical verities, that a luxury car, for example, displayed timeless qualities because the cycle of style changes, technological advances and consumer taste will soon enough prove this to be false.[45]

42 Ibid., p. 19.

43 Ibid.

44 Quoted in Nigel Whitely, 'Towards a throw-away culture: consumerism, "style obsolescence" and cultural theory in the 1950s and 1960s', *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 10, no. 2 (1987), p. 11.

45 cf. Massey *The Independent Group*, pp. 92–3, and Whitely 'Towards a throw-away culture'.

Alloway made a similar point in *Violent America* when he challenged the idea of the movies as purveyors of myth: 'The wonders of movies are the marvels of show business, and the heroes are the condensations of topical interests rather than the recurrence of ancient mysteries. . . . The movies confer grandeur on the present by dealing with current events in

maximal forms'.[46] The perennial problem for filmmakers, he argued, is the alignment of novel and conservative factors. Technical innovation (such as widescreen, colour, or 3–D) with conservative content: romance for example. Look, he said, at the way primitive story lines are endlessly recycled and restyled, citing Kubrick's *2001: Space Odyssey* (1968) as 'basically no more complex than Georges Méliès's *A Trip to the Moon* (1902)', or the 'ready-made expressive elements in combination with technological innovation' that were Hammer studio's and Roger Corman's 1960s updates on the 1930s Universal horror cycle.[47]

Positioning himself against Robert Warshow's still much championed argument that the gangster film finds its classical form in the early 1930s films *Scarface* (1932), *Little Caesar* (1931) and *The Public Enemy* (1931), Alloway claimed instead that the gangster continues to shift and change to fit with the needs of its audience which now recognizes the 'archetypical' gangster as old fashioned and obsolete. Refuting, too, André Bazin's claim that cinema had reached a level of classical perfection by 1938 or 1939, he claimed instead that the feature movies of the 1940s and 1950s amplified and developed the tropes and traits evident in movies from the late 1930s: 'especially in the films of violence, [which] reveal thematic complexity as well as formal elaboration. This is, and very significantly, the period in which the feature movie became more intense and "maximised".'[48]

Complementary to this line of thinking on film's amplification and intensification of conventions is Banham's observation that 'engineering a standardised product is essentially a norm, stabilised only for the moment, the very opposite of an ideal because it is a compromise between possible production and possible further development into a new and more desirable norm'.[49] Change and stasis, then, characterize Hollywood's film production, so that by the 1940s and 1950s we are 'witness to a maximum development of conventions'. Linking the movies to the automobile industry, Alloway wrote the 'annual style changes were sufficient to entertain us with a comedy of newness but not radical enough to disrupt continuity with earlier models'.[50] Alongside an aesthetic of obsolescence, the *maximization of conventions* is a key to Alloway's conception of how the movies work. 'In the movies we are faced with figures that embody in terms of contemporary references maximum states of age, beauty, strength, revenge, or whatever'.[51] Discussing formulaic fictions, he noted that violence as 'motivation gives the maximum definition to a story, a principle common to magazine fiction and violent movies'.[52] The action movie concerns itself with the maximum state of being, and what matters is what generates intensity.[53]

You can see these observations foreshadowed in a 1959 article for *Film Quarterly* by Colin Young, who was attempting to explain why Kubrick and other young filmmakers made action movies:

> One of the attractions of a war or crime story is that it provides an almost unique opportunity to contrast an individual of our

46 Alloway, *Violent America*, p. 53.

47 Ibid., p. 41. Alloway expounds upon Hammer horror films in 'Monster films'.

48 Alloway, *Violent America*, p. 11.

49 Robbins and Baas, *The Independent Group*, p. 224.

50 Ibid., p. 25.

51 Ibid., p. 12.

52 Ibid., p. 11.

53 Ibid., p. 37.

> contemporary society with a solid framework of accepted value, which the audience becomes fully aware of, and which can be used as a counterpoint to a human, individual, emotional situation. Further, war acts as a kind of hothouse for forced, quick breeding of attitudes and feelings. Attitudes crystallize and come out into the open. Conflict is natural, when it would in a less critical situation have to be introduced almost as a contrivance, and would thus appear forced, or-even worse-false.[54]

Similarly, in his discussion of the gangster film, Warshow wrote 'One goes to any individual example of the type with very definite expectations, and originality is to be welcomed only in the degree that it intensifies the expected experience without fundamentally altering it'.[55] But where Young and Warshow finish their analysis with these observations, Alloway begins his at this point and moves on to examine how the iconographic intensities are produced through, for example, casting and how this might link to certain kinds of editing strategies.

On *Kiss Me Deadly* he wrote:

> The film is jammed with character actors, Greeks and Italians, cops and gunmen, doctors and janitors, chicks and desk clerks. They are stereotyped but the stereotypes are so numerous and emphatic that they add up to a real crowd. They are presented on the small black and white screen with a dense but easy patterning. It is a kind of deliberate revival of the brisk and eventful style of small screen black & white movies of the1940s which by 1955 was somewhat under pressure from the long takes and tranquil spaces of the big screens.[56]

The 'brisk and eventful style' of the action film with its 'stepped-up violence' has, Alloway noted, developed an aesthetic of discontinuous editing,

> as if Soviet montage has been revived via television commercials . . . so that a gunfight, for instance, becomes an anthology of stances, wounds, falls, made tolerable to the public by not dwelling on bullet impact (except for glimpses of galvanic body reactions) or exit wounds (except for glimpses of torn clothing and spurts of arterial blood).[57]

Alloway's focus on the intensities of genre movies, particularly as they are manifest within scenes of violence, suggest he shared a similar aesthetic sensibility to that found in Manny Farber's criticism.[58] But though it appears that he is in thrall to the same elements of a male-oriented primitive cinema, Alloway was keen to suggest how different their approach is to the movies. 'Farber's eye and memory for the original underground films, which he writes about like an aphorist on pep pills, are marvellous'. However, he reduced 'the postwar situation to a choice between lean male movies and gross features', which leads Farber to dismiss the elaborately scenic style of Anthony Mann Westerns as

54 Colin Young, 'The Hollywood War of Independence', *Film Quarterly*, vol. 12, no. 3 (1959), pp. 4–15.

55 Robert Warshow, 'The gangster as tragic hero', in *Immediate Experience: Movies, Comics, Theatre and Other Aspects of Popular Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 100.

56 Alloway, *Violent America*, pp. 84–5.

57 Ibid., pp. 23, 25.

58 Many Farber, *Negative Space: Manny Farber on the Movies* (New York, NY: Da Capo, 1998).

'postcard Westerns with Jimmy Stewart and his harassed Adam's apple approach to gutty acting'.[59] But, as Alloway pointed out, the locations in the Mann Westerns have a function, and are not just part of a bloated set of production values:

> The West of the 1880s is enacted in the unchanged present landscape, known to us from post cards, photographs in the *National Geographic* magazine, and state tourist-office literature, or from the bubble on a Vista-Dome train and through an automobile windshield. To Farber the peaks and the streams and the forests are fancy additions to the puritan male ethic that he discovers in action films. In fact, they are part of the correspondence among media which give a film the authority of being real at more than one level as it complies with information derived from other sources. This kind of allusion, characteristic of postwar movies, has an elaborate emblematic quality opposed to Farber's attachment to the straight and narrow.[60]

Movies announce they are 'real' at declarative and connotative levels. The perception of realism 'as a complex of physical details and implicit meanings is singularly applicable to a discussion of the movies', argued Alloway.[61] Mann's Westerns may declare that they represent the West of the 1880s, but this claim only has credence if the world he depicts corresponds to the West that we recognize from comparative portrayals familiar from other movies and other media. Alloway, however, is less interested in pursuing questions of realism and more concerned with film's links to other media, and its place within cultures of consumption. In one of his finest moments of analysis, Alloway discussed the idea that the function of the media is to act as 'a guide to life defined in terms of possessions and relationships'. He asks us to consider the hero of two Hitchcock movies, both chase films:

> In the pre-war *39 Steps* [1935] the hero wore tweeds and got a little rumpled as the chase wore on, like a gentleman farmer after a day's shooting. In *North by Northwest* (1959) the hero is an advertising man (a significant choice of profession) and though he is hunted from New York to South Dakota his clothes stay neatly Brooks Brothers. That is to say, the dirt, sweat, and damage of pursuit are less important than the package in which the hero comes-the tweedy British gentleman or the urbane Madison Avenue man. The point is the drama of possessions (in this case clothes) characterise the hero as much as (or more than) his motivation and actions.[62]

In these two Hitchcock films, then, British class politics, advertising, men's fashions, or, more broadly, cultures of consumption, inform how we interpret the moving image, producing, according to Alloway, a cinema that must be understood as a compound art. By this he means that cinema draws from and is comprised of other art forms. In and of itself this is hardly an original observation, but what makes it worthy of note is that Alloway links film to alternative consumer products and industrial

59 Ibid., p. 23.

60 Alloway, *Violent America*, p. 27.

61 Ibid., p. 9.

62 Alloway, 'The long front of culture', pp. 25–6.

practices, not just to theatre, painting, literature or other legitimate arts.[63] Any compelling critical opinion, therefore, must recognize the manifold influences at work on and within movies and validate its argument through comparing film to like film (cycles, trends, genre) and to other mass media.

By charting and identifying patterns of recurrence and change in the movies, the critic should be able to arrive at an opinion that is verifiable against the evidence mustered before the reader. In this light, Alloway offered a view on how, for example, American democracy is represented in the postwar action film that does not rely for evidence on a single canonical movie, or a superficial appeal to the zeitgeist, or an over-elaborate allegorical reading. Mapping the changes and continuities that occurred in the crime film and its many subsets and cycles from the 1930s gangster films through to the stories of undercover agents, prison films, private detectives and city *exposé* films of the 1940s and 1950s, which maximize the tropes of infiltration, informing and surveillance, Alloway concluded:

> American democracy has a traditional abhorrence of both informing and eavesdropping and certainly their paralleling the techniques of secret police in totalitarian countries is disturbing. The participation of heroes in this contested area of criminal rights is typical of the complexity of postwar popular culture. These situations exceed the constraints of liberal opinion, but the presentation of the problems in a hard-nosed way does not constitute their endorsement. It does, however, situate the hero in a world without simple values, and this is, I take it, a naturalistic view of events.[64]

Noting that the movies among other media have been responsible for raising a greater awareness of the 'dimensions of living that include violence' (but dismissing the argument that the media are a principal cause of violence), Alloway wrote,

> American life is a drag strip of hotted-up crisis. This aggrandized present induces anxiety partly because, by a curious twist, American practicality, the ethic that something can always be done, gives equal urgency to both marginal and central problems. The mass media's social effects have been subject to such a process of intensification.[65]

In Alloway's view, this is less a moral problem than a causal effect of conservative forms and technological innovation that is most 'fully visualised and articulate when the subject is violent'.[66] His interest in violence and the movies is not therefore limited to a sociological account of the movies, or its dramatic potential (*à la* Young), or formal conventions (*à la* Warshow), or to its abstract expression (*à la* Farber), but in the dialogue that exists between movies and the broader culture.

Designed as it was to record some of the persistent themes of violence in the movies, for Alloway the programme at MOMA provided evidence that audiences had a 'high tolerance of violence', not because they had

63 See, for example, Harry Alan Potamkin, *The Compound Cinema: the Film Writings of Harry Alan Potamkin* (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 1977).

64 Alloway, *Violent America*, p. 43.

65 Ibid., p. 65.

66 Ibid., p. 71.

grown inured to violent images propagated by the movies and other media, but because movies increasingly relayed the idea that there was an association between violence and serious social concern.[67] 'Consider', he says, 'two treatments of anti Semitism, both of 1947: one, *Gentlemen's Agreement*, treats the subject in terms of a soap opera about career, the other, *Crossfire*, in terms of a murder mystery culminating with the killer being shot down in the street.'[68] With the latter, 'social problems and issues are presented in terms of vivid action. As a result, the capacity of violent movies to deal with situations less tranquilizing than the drama of earlier days was enhanced'. In these films, violence is not the 'athletics of an adventure film but the emblematic expression of current tensions'.[69]

In an analysis that ranged across film cycles and social trends, and the casting of actors, Alloway noted that audiences were exposed 'to the spectacle of violence and death in a context of psychic depth, institutional doubt and existential solitude'.[70] He argued,

> it is not the dogmatic use of scepticism, the popular psychoanalysis, or the vernacular existentialism in particular films that is significant; it is their combined diffusion that turned the prewar action film (basically athletic and cheerful) into the more savage, more pessimistic film of violence with its gallery of extreme situations and desperate heroes.[71]

This is, it seems to me, an extraordinary insight into the dynamics of postwar American genre movies, and one that goes someway towards explaining why this era of filmmaking still holds our attention fifty-odd years after the fact.

In the work that he has left to us, Alloway begins to articulate a theory of the movies that gives equal weight to the industrial processes of production, creative collaboration and the specialized knowledge that audiences brought to the movies. The emphasis on film cycles, rather than the discrete film or genre defined in terms of an ideal, enabled a content analysis that valued uniqueness *and* convention. Furthermore, Alloway showed how this could be profitably linked to the social and cultural consumption of film: a film analysis that recognized a symbiotic loop between producer, distributor, exhibitor, critic and audience. Three decades or so after the publication of *Violent America*, there is still much that film studies can learn from Alloway, and from further research into the idea of the movies' articulation of regular modification and ephemeral impressions, and as the source and the expression of an expendable series of icons. As things now stand, however, Alloway's insights into postwar film cycles and the intensification of conventions remain woefully undervalued and under examined.

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67 Ibid., p. 10.

68 Ibid., p. 45.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid., p. 26.

71 Ibid., p. 25.

dossier

Expanding the frame: Sally Potter's digital histories and archival futures

SOPHIE MAYER

In her defining reflection on cybertechnologies emerging from the military-industrial complex and the ways in which feminist artists could engage with them, Donna Haraway asked: 'What kind of politics could embrace partial, contradictory, permanently unclosed constructions of personal and collective selves and still be faithful, effective – and, ironically, socialist-feminist?' She proposed 'a cyborg politics', one in which humans, and particularly those self-identified as 'oppositional', recognize that a kinship with machines, rather than embedding them in dominant technoculture, could free them from myths of origin, unity, transcendence and closure.[1] Haraway's theory remains curiously under-mobilized in discussions of feminist filmmaking, even as it intersects with the digital, yet it offers a potential solution to the conundrum posed by Caitlin Fisher in her essay on 'Feminist digital aesthetics'. Reading a number of self-identified feminist hypertexts and web projects, she observes that they draw uncritically on tropes and practices connected to the second wave – such as essentialized embodiment and domesticity – despite 'current feminist projects aimed at deconstructing identities and challenging even the building of narratives or bodies to inhabit'.[2] Fisher provocatively quotes hypertext theorist Johndan Johnson-Eiola, asking 'what would happen . . . if we were to "allow our nostalgia to channel new possibilities into old pathways?"'[3] In this essay, I argue that digital possibilities engaging with analogue pathways (in both cinema and performance) exactly draw a link between Gene Youngblood's 1970s *Expanded Cinema* and the fluid screens of contemporary media convergence and experimental remediations, and in so doing critically

1 Donna Haraway, 'The cyborg manifesto', in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: the Reinvention of Nature* (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 1991), p. 157.

2 Caitlin Fisher, 'Feminist digital aesthetics: the everyday and yesterday', in Janine Marchessault and Susan Lord (eds), *Fluid Screens, Expanded Cinema* (Buffalo, NY, Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 2007), p. 151.

3 Ibid., p. 155.

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contextualize second-wave feminist aesthetics through and as the source of 'new possibilities.'

Taking up Haraway's question and Fisher's conundrum, I consider Sally Potter, a socialist-feminist filmmaker whose career shows a predilection for cyborg visions, moving from live performance to the machinic medium of cinema, itself always part of her performance work. Potter's early Expanded Cinema works,[4] which bridge her investigation of performance and moving-image media, have recently returned to visibility with the publication of David Curtis's history of artists' film and video in Britain,[5] and the digitization and screenings, in 2006, of her 1970 dual-screen projection *Play*.[6] Expanded Cinema, I argue, provides a framework for historicizing digitality, and the attention is concurrent with Potter's medium-shift not only to digital cinema but also to a sophisticated artist's website[7] and the Sally Potter Online Archive (SP-ARK), which will present digital versions of Potter's archival material in a unique interactive online research environment.[8]

Despite, or because of, its innovation, SP-ARK can (only) be read in the context of Potter's forty years of engagement with technologies of the image. Potter's turn to the digital – including the generation of 'value-added' content for DVDs, as well as digital colour-grading and sound mixing – represents a feminist cyberpraxis as part of a fluid continuum from, rather than a sharp contrast to, her early work in performance, particularly in her attention to the role of the audience. In order to create interactive spaces, whether on stage, on film or online, her work has consistently played with form to generate open-ended texts that address the viewer directly, expanding the frame not only in terms of formal and narrative experimentation, but expanding it into the audience, breaking the 'fourth wall' to create a feminist cyber-network.[9]

In each of Potter's films, there is a productive, politicized tension between surveillance and self-reflection within technologies of the image, beginning with the use of still photographs counterposed with moving sequences in *Thriller* (1979), which counterpoint the constraint and release experienced by the character Mimi. In *YES* (2005), celluloid contains, and is expanded by, the dual presence of the digital: firstly, as threatening and unobserved surveillance camera that captures, from on high, the initiation of a romance between He, a Lebanese immigrant, and She, an Irish-American scientist, and latterly as a handheld digital video camera directly addressed by She, in a scene that draws on and reorients the conventions of 'feminine', domestic and confessional mediatizations such as video diaries and live webcams. Constraint and oppression are coded in and by dominant uses of visual technologies, whether stills from mainstream opera productions or surveillance footage, that produce and/or control particular kinds of gendered behaviour. Yet resistance is also signalled, through a feminist appropriation and skilled manipulation of 'the master's tools'.[10] Rather than an ambivalence, this repeated pattern signifies a theoretical and pragmatic investigation of technologies of the

4 Expanded Cinema refers here not to Gene Youngblood's concept, which he defined as not 'a movie at all: like life it's a process of becoming, man's ongoing historical drive to manifest his consciousness outside of his mind, in front of his eyes' (Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* [New York, NY: Dutton, 1970], p. 41). Rather, it refers to a group of events and practices involving a mixture of film screening, visible apparatus and performance that emerged from the London Filmmakers' Co-op in the early 1970s. Jackie Hatfield provides an insightful discussion of both Expanded Cinemas in 'Expanded Cinema and narrative: some reasons for a review of the avant-garde debates around narrativity', *Millennium Film Journal*, nos 39/40 (2003). URL: http://www.mfj-online.org/journalPages/MFJ39/hatfieldpage.html [accessed 25 Jan 2008].

5 David Curtis, *A History of Artists' Film and Video in Britain* (London: British Film Institute, 2007).

6 Luke Fowler, 'Expanded cinema: time/space/structure', *MAP*, no. 9 (2007), pp. 4–6.

7 URL: http://www.sallypotter.com [accessed 25 Jan 2008].

8 URL: http://www.sp-ark.co.uk [accessed 25 Jan 2008].

9 See Sadie Plant, *Zeroes and Ones: Digital Women and the New Technoculture* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1997) on the femininity and feminism of the network.

10 Referring to social technologies such as linear narrative and 'correct' English, Audre Lorde argues that '*the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.* They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.' Lorde, 'The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house', in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 1984), pp. 110–13. My argument here is that Potter refigures the DV camera as not being, and never having been, the master's tool.

image as they intersect with Foucauldian social technologies of gender, race and class.[11] For Potter as an artisanal filmmaker, technology signifies work and play in a 'partial, contradictory' engagement with the question of gendered cultural production.

Play, a double-screen projection from the early days of the London Filmmakers' Co-op's (LFMC) Expanded Cinema movement, consists of two films shot at a high angle from a window, with two cameras at a 45º angle to one another (figure 1). Three sets of twins play in a London street, disappearing into, and reappearing from, the 'cut' between the screens. The films loop these moments of disappearance and reappearance, reproducing both the activity of play and the setup of the cameras. The setup, with its high angle and neutral observation, suggests both surveillance and a reflexive investigation, through the repeated observation of children, of social technologies that contextualize women's access to art-making. At the film's climax, a black woman steps across the 'cut', her movements looped repeatedly in a way that makes visible both her race and gender, and also the apparatus that renders her at once troublingly absent and present. *Play* represents a commitment to the way in which any technology, whether bodily or electronic, can be used to reveal its own processes.

Fig. 1.
Expanding cinema across multiple screens: *Play*ing with the cut.
© Sally Potter [1970]/Adventure Pictures, 2006.

This commitment to transparent process (as product) was material to the artistic milieux in which Potter moved during the late 1960s and 1970s: not only LFMC, but also the emergent New Dance companies, the improv jazz scene, and the feminist time-based art practice that culminated in the ICA's definitional *About Time* exhibition in 1980.[12] The move into digital emphasizes the connection between Potter's multimedia and multimodal boundary-crossing and feminist practices such as making process visible, open-ended narratives and making the means of production available to all. With the development of the digital, Potter is not only using the medium reflexively, but embracing paratextual technologies in order to make transparent, in her own voice, the process of filmmaking. The successful website for *YES* included a postproduction blog by Potter and transnationally active talkboards,[13] as did an innovative mini-site hosted by English National Opera for Potter's

11 Anne Balsamo identifies the value of Foucault's social technologies for reading technologies of the image in her *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1996).

12 Judith Mackrell, *Out of Line: the Story of British New Dance* (London: Dance Books, 1992); Stephanie Jordan, *Striding Out: Aspects of Contemporary and New Dance in Britain* (London: Dance Books, 1992); Emlyn Claid, *Yes? No! Maybe . . .: Seductive Ambiguity in Dance* (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2006); Sally Potter, 'On shows', in Catherine Elwes, Rose Garrard and Sandy Nairne (eds), *About Time: Video, Performance and Installation by 21 Women Artists* (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1980), np.

13 Blog archives http://www.yesthemovie.co.uk/page?articleType=Content.YES%20DIARY; talkboards and http://www.yesthemovie.co.uk/page?articleType=Content.TALK%20TO%20SALLY [accessed 25 January 2008].

production of *Carmen* (2007),[14] which attracted both old and new media attention as a groundbreaking experiment in transparency and audience engagement.[15]

Fig. 2.
Screening live performance: *Carmen*'s critique of surveillance culture. © Tristram Kenton/ English National Opera, 2007.

The digital was already part of *Carmen*'s performance in the form of surveillance video projections appearing on a gauze scrim over the forestage, on which Carmen was seen before she entered the stage (figure 2). The gauze, from which Carmen gazes directly at us, stands representationally for the way in which the digital signifies Potter's engagement with the audience and recalls perhaps the most famous of

14 URL: http://carmen.eno.org [accessed 25 January 2008].

15 Lloyd Davis, 'ENO getting it spot-on for *Carmen*'. URL: http://perfectpath.wordpress.com/2007/09/14/eno-getting-it-spot-on-for-carmen/ [accessed 25 January 2008]; Ben Hoyle, '*Carmen*, the blog, may be the start of something big', *The Times*, 17 November 2007.

Potter's formal innovations, Orlando's gaze to camera, which in the final instance is mediated by her daughter's video camera (*Orlando* [1993]). Ann Cooper Albright argues that this immediacy of engagement marks performance, and dance in particular, as a way of doing feminist theory with the body, and inverting the Mulveyan gaze:

> The physical presence of the dancer – the aliveness of her body – radically challenges the implicit power dynamic of any gaze, for there is always the very real possibility that she will look back! Even if the dancer doesn't literally return the gaze of the spectator, her ability to present her own experience can radically change the spectatorial dynamic of the performance.[16]

This ability 'to present one's own experience' changes the spectatorial dynamic in both directions in Potter's work: not only does the performer 'look back,' but the audience is invited to see their gaze as participatory. The imbrication of performative looking back and a radical spectatorial dynamic is central to the conception of SP-ARK's interface, which is made possible by social networking technologies but originates in Potter's aesthetics, as embodied in the strategic employment of video at the end of *Orlando*. The video's look is liberatory, showing Orlando as two (or more) sexes, a subject of many historical eras and narratives, and at once a spectator (of the angel) and a performer. The film creates not so much a suspension of disbelief, but a Harawayian relay of play, engaging the viewer in a virtual space in which multiple narratives and identities are simultaneously possible.

Jackie Hatfield, overseeing the development of a digital archive of British artists' film and video, argued that her archival practice mirrors combinatory practices of the Expanded Cinema that she is preserving: 'Computer-based convergence technologies offer . . . a context for the dissemination and discovery of new historical narratives. This technology has the potential to make visible interconnecting histories . . . the overlapping, multilayered narratives of any one moment can be made visible simultaneously.'[17] Hatfield's article forms part of *Camera Obscura*'s 2006 'Archive for the future', reflecting both backwards and forwards on directions in feminist film and theory from the perspective of the journal's thirtieth anniversary. Hatfield's identification of 'interconnecting histories' implicitly draws on the Marxist/feminist insistence on the end of grand narratives, which bridges a second-wave commitment to recovering and re-visioning lost histories, and a third-wave investment in proliferating narratives and subject positions.[18] Digital databases, according to Hatfield, reorient narrative structure by placing it transparently in users' hands. SP-ARK provides users with fully searchable access (keywords, tags, categories) to all textual, visual and audiovisual material dating back to the early shorts. Students will be able to make their own narrative interventions by writing 'pathways', a chain of linked blog-like notes. As with blogs, the pathways are open to

16 Ann Cooper Albright, *Choreographing Difference* (Hanover NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), p. 15.

17 Jackie Hatfield, 'Imagining future gardens of history', *Camera Obscura* (62), vol. 21, no. 2 (2006), p. 189.

18 Linda Hutcheon identifies the emergence of postmodernity as both era and structuring device with a debate between Jürgen Habermas and Jean-François Lyotard in which both philosophers 'agreed that modernity could not be separated from notions of unity or universality or what Lyotard dubbed "metanarratives" . . . for Lyotard, postmodernity is characterized by . . . smaller and multiple narratives which seek no universalizing stabilization or legitimation.' Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, second edition (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 23–4.

commentary from other users, building infinite networks of 'partial, contradictory, permanently unclosed' arguments and counter-arguments.

These pathways make visible the 'work of culture in the age of cybernetic systems' as described by Bill Nichols.[19] Using language that echoes utopian feminism, Nichols locates the 'explosive potential for . . . the promotion of collectivity and affinity, for interconnectedness, systemic networking and shared decision-making . . . this potential democratization of power' in forms of social and narrative organization arising from resistant, Harawayian appropriation of computing technology.[20] Pathways are attached to a drag-and-drop palette of archival objects they have located through their own search strings.[21] This palette creates a focus on contextual readings, reflecting Patrick Bazin's assertion that

> a heritage object with no link to a specific context can have no memorial value. The work of memory is precisely that of re-establishing links which would give meaning to this object by tying it to its synchronic environment, and to its line of ascendancy.[22]

Insistently narrativizing archival objects, the pathways create contextual histories that are precisely an 'archive for the future', both historically aware and engaged in generating future possibilities.

The 'overlapping, multilayered narratives', which are always historicized, always showing their working, made possible by SP-ARK's interface, bear a strong resemblance to Potter's early work in multimedia performance, and particularly *Combines* (1972), projected as part of a performance by the foundational New Dance company Strider, of which Potter was a founding member. As its title suggests, *Combines* investigated the process of combination, merging its choreographic meaning (a series of steps or gestures) with its suggestion of, firstly, machine codes, and, in a second and related meaning, 'overlapping, multilayered narratives . . . made visible simultaneously'. The films Potter made to project with Richard Alston's choreography were looped on three different screens, as dancers interacted with their screen avatars, sometimes synching with them. The film consists of five movements, each drawing attention to the apparatus, but also to the performer's body as both apparatus and process: looping back to allude to the camera as processual. In the third movement, shots of the dancer's developing attitude reveal it as a frontal version of Rose English's arabesque in *Thriller*,[23] with the dancer's leg extending towards the camera/dancer onstage/audience and threatening to break the fourth wall.

Shots of this attitude, as rehearsed in the studio, are intercut with haptic closeups of moving fabric that reveal themselves as back views of bodies moving upstairs. These shots are, suggestively, of the back view of an audience arriving as the dancer prepares, recalled by surveillance footage of the audience arriving outside the ENO shown on the gauze during the *Carmen* overture. *Combines*' final shot is of the audience, now approaching the camera. As a shadow-archive of both process and

19 Bill Nichols, 'The work of culture in the age of cybernetic systems', in John T. Caldwell (ed.), *Theories of New Media* (London: Athlone, 2000), pp. 90–114.

20 Ibid., p. 94.

21 Developers' blog: http://sp-ark.typepad.com/blog/ [accessed 25 January 2008].

22 Patrick Bazin, 'Reconfigured memory', in Giulio Biaisi (ed.), *The Future of Memory* (Brepols: Turnhout, 2002), p. 27.

23 See Elena del Rio, 'Rethinking feminist film theory: counter-narcissistic performance in Sally Potter's *Thriller*', *Quarterly Journal of Film and Video*, vol. 21, no. 1 (2004), pp. 11–24.

performance, *Combines* highlights the formal boundary-crossing in Potter's work and works to deconstruct the author/archive hierarchy. In performance, the film screens operated like a mirror to reflect, extend, distort and destabilize the space of the stage, 'moving' the wings and rehearsal area into the theatrical space, breaking not only the fourth wall between stage and audience, but the back wall behind which the messy labour of artmaking occurs.

The *Carmen* blog, running from preproduction, also functions like a glimpse into Potter's dailiness, echoing the handwritten working notebooks (which will be available online) and infusing the finished work with the sense of improvization seen in rehearsals, as well as reinstating the sense of *work* in the Marxist sense of labour. Douglass H. Thomson commented as early as 1988 that: 'It is not clear to me at this stage the degree to which web production will lead to Benjamin's desired politicization of art and discourse, but surely it offers a new space for reflection upon the relation of labor to power'.[24] Janine Marchessault and Susan Lord argue that digital artworks 'must be process-oriented, self-reflexive . . . engaged in work.'[25] The digital – rooted in *digit*, finger – continues to demonstrate Potter's aptitude for the hands-on, and her re-presentation of labour in relation to the power of the image. SP-ARK, in which users can investigate precisely the filmmaker's labour – and parallel it or replicate it with their own as theorists or filmmakers – suggests Thomson's 'new space' in which the cyborg connects labour to dailiness (figure 3). Haraway writes that 'Feminists have recently claimed that women are given to dailiness, that women more than men somehow sustain daily life, and so have a privileged epistemological position potentially. There is a compelling aspect to this claim, one that makes visible unvalued female activity and names it as the ground of life.'[26]

24 Douglass H. Thomson, 'The work of art in the age of electronic (re)production', *Romanticism on the Net*, no. 10 (May 1998). URL: http://www.erudit.org/revue/ron/1998/v/n10/005805ar.html#n16 [accessed 25 January 2008].

25 Janine Marchessault and Susan Lord, 'Introduction', in *Expanded Cinema*, pp. 22–3.

26 Haraway, 'The cyborg manifesto', p. 180.

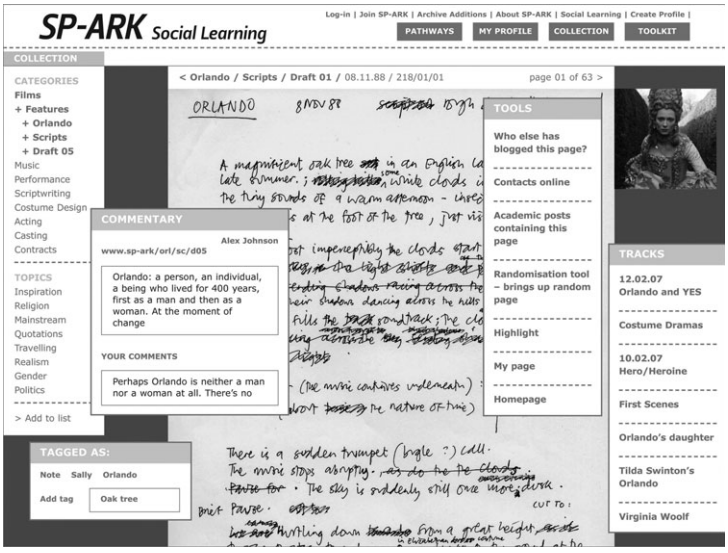

Fig. 3.
Screens within screens: recording labour in SP-ARK © Steve Masters/Adventure Pictures, 2006.

SP-ARK makes visible the unvalued, and thus feminized, activity of filmmaking, from early notes (in domestic and private daily spaces such as diaries and letters) through failures, refusals and difficulties. It reflects the dailiness of labour involved in filmmaking as opposed to the heroic narrative portrayed in mainstream films. In *The Tango Lesson* (1997) Potter made this unvalued labour visible, and explored ways in which preproduction and screenwriting (as opposed to directing) are feminized. Recognizing the labour, both physical and intellectual, of film production, SP-ARK also resituates the auteur/practitioner in relation to the theorist. The site's development with the Screen School at Goldsmith's College has brought together theorists and practitioners (both faculty and students) in a reflection of the lost potential of the 1970s moment on which Alexandra Juhasz reflects in her 'archive for the future' in *Camera Obscura*.[27] Juhasz argues for a community of practitioners, theorists and spectators for whom technologies of the image are daily, both in the sense of ever-present, and accessible as a vernacular.

Potter's earliest film, made in 1968, was called *Daily*. It was created for a dance choreographed by Ernest Berk with whom Potter studied. Predating her multimedia projection for *Combines*, *Daily* ambitiously consisted of eighteen minutes of colour 8 mm film, projected on four screens. Each performer was filmed in his or her home engaged in domestic labour; their gestures informed the choreography of the piece, networking the performer, through labour, with their avatar onscreen. *Daily* offered a representation of interactivity as hybridizing work and play, labour and artistic creation. With *Daily* and *Combines*, Potter opened the door for current multimedia dance, but also foregrounded her work's focus on labour and liveness as routes to constituting an embodied network of filmmaker, performer and viewer. Peter Weibel notes that 'the video and digital art of today has taken up the lance left behind by the cinematic avant-garde of the 1960s'.[28] Potter is one of the few figures to bridge Expanded Cinema and digital new media, and to have brought an outward-focused socialist-feminism to both. Multiplying the performer onstage, and making visible the process of rehearsal – and of film – *Combines* and *Daily* prefigure the dual (but not dualistic) functions of technologies of the image that mediate both surveillance and self-reflection in Potter's feature films, as well as the multiplication of perspective, and the visibility of process, foregrounded by SP-ARK.

Part of SP-ARK's investment in visibility has been user-oriented development, based around workshops with Goldsmith's masters' students, focused on realizing a working practice of interactivity that is more than button-pressing. Martin Rieser argues that 'interactivity can . . . collapse the distance between subject and object, and between interior and exterior spaces'.[29] This destabilization points towards a socialist-feminist politics of collaborative making in which there is no originary or superior text or textual reading. Thomson notes that 'hypertext deftly

27 Alexandra Juhasz, 'The future was then: reinvesting in feminist media and politics', *Camera Obscura* (61), vol. 21, no. 1 (2006), pp. 53–7.

28 Peter Weibel, 'Expanded cinema, video and virtual environments', in Jeffrey Shaw and Peter Weibel (eds), *Future Cinema: the Cinematic Imaginary After Film* (Karlsruhe and Cambridge, MA: ZKM and MIT Press, 2003), p. 125.

29 Martin Rieser, 'The politics of interactivity: the uncertainty principle', in Martin Rieser and Andrea Zapp (eds), *New Screen Media: Cinema/Art/Narrative* (London: British Film Institute, 2002), p. 146.

underscores that fact by allowing us to approach it from a number of perspectives. . . . In place of the "unapproachable", it provides *rapprochement*.'[30] This *rapprochement* between text and viewer, and between live performance and visual media, undoes by reworking the 'to-be-looked-at-ness' of cinema in creating a looking back. Potter's technofeminist play does not break the frame, but expands it both through a historical awareness and a networked dialogue, demonstrating that cinema and the digital always-already contain and connect to bodies: those of the past and future audience, partial and networked as the filmmaker herself.

30 Thomson, 'The work of art'.

Of other worlds: nature and the supernatural in the moving image installations of Jaki Irvine

MAEVE CONNOLLY

It is possible to trace a fascination with the supernatural, often aligned to the exploration of place, within recent artists' film and video. Otherworldly figures appear in an array of video installations, from *Stasi City* (Jane and Louise Wilson, 1997), *The House* (Eija-Liisa Ahtila, 2002), *Baltimore* (Isaac Julien, 2003) to *Ghost Story* (Willie Doherty, 2007), and recur within various publications exploring the materialities of artists' film, video and photography.[1] My discussion here is specifically concerned with the evocation of 'other worlds' in Jaki Irvine's installation *The Silver Bridge* (2002) and it examines the interplay between natural and supernatural phenomena in this work, informed by Fredric Jameson's theorization of the 'ghost story'. The rise of the supernatural was noted by Michael Newman as early as 1995 in an article that explores the work of several artists, including Irvine. Newman argues that 'a sense of the enigmatic and the paranormal, of that which resists interpretation and understanding . . . is a feature distinguishing much contemporary [video] work from that of the sixties and seventies, which has a more rationalistic basis'.[2] He suggests that the earlier generation of video artists often challenged formal rationality in the name of a more complete truth, potentially linked with a political project, while artists such as Irvine appear to reject the very possibility of a complete truth.

A disjunction between truth and rationality is apparent in the Wilsons' four-screen installation *Stasi City*, which depicts the former East German secret police headquarters in Berlin. The building is staged as

1 Publications concerned with artists' film and video include Jane Connarty and Josephine Lanyon (eds), *Ghosting: the Role of the Archive within Contemporary Artists' Film and Video* (Bristol: Picture This, 2006), and Pavel Buchler, *Ghost Stories: Stray Thoughts on Photography and Film* (London: Proboscis, 1999). For evidence of a more general interest in the supernatural within contemporary art, see Gilda Williams (ed.), *The Gothic: Documents in Contemporary Art* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press and Whitechapel Press, 2007).

2 Michael Newman discusses Irvine's video works *Sweet Tooth*, *Margaret Again* and *Star* (all 1994) in 'Au-delà de l'object perdu: de la sculpture au film et à la vidéo/ Beyond the lost object: from sculpture to film and video', *Art Press*, no. 202 (1995), p. 47.

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a repository of spirits, a place in which figures seem to float, suspended in time. Although these figures exist as witnesses, their ghostly appearance seems to articulate the perceived limits of documentary representation within a sociohistorical context in which the very notion of evidence has been compromised by the abuse of power. This is just one of a number of moving-image works in which the history of a particular place or community is figured through reference to the supernatural. For example, Susan Hiller draws upon early horror film and Jewish mysticism in *Psychic Archaeology* (2005), commissioned as a response to the city of Bristol, while Adam Chodzko's *Around* (2007), one of a series of works commissioned within the context of a public art project in Ballymun, near Dublin, focuses on unseen forces emanating from the site of a demolished tower block.[3]

It would seem that the realm of the supernatural offers the possibility of uncovering a history particular to a specific place, which may be hidden or indeed repressed. Jameson's brief but tantalizing discussion of the ghost story, in relation to the Overlook Hotel and the return of repressed class consciousness in *The Shining* (1980), would seem to be relevant here. Distinguishing Stanley Kubrick's film from Stephen King's original novel and other explorations of the occult in Hollywood cinema of the 1970s, Jameson theorizes the ghost story as a subgenre characterized by a 'peculiarly contingent and constitutive dependence on physical place and, in particular, on the material house as such'.[4] He notes that the ghost story first emerged in this form towards the end of the nineteenth century as a reaction to bourgeois culture's insistence on the life-span of the biological individual at the expense of collective cultural memory. In the golden age of the genre, he notes, 'the ghost is at one with a building of some antiquity, of which it is the bad dream, and to whose incomprehensive succession of generations of inhabitants it makes allusion as in some return of the repressed of the middle-class mind'.[5] If, as Jameson suggests, the return of this genre in the late 1970s articulates renewed anxieties concerning the loss of transgenerational memory, it is perhaps no surprise that images of the supernatural should figure prominently in moving-image works (such as Chodzko's *Around*) that explore or respond to processes of urban redevelopment.

Sometimes the supernatural may be explicitly invoked as a point of reference to signal a disjunction between collective memory and the public sphere, as in the case of Willie Doherty's *Ghost Story.* This work seems to signal a growing emphasis within Doherty's practice on the spoken word and its place in cinematic narrative. This single-screen video projection incorporates a voiceover (by Stephen Rea) exploring the figure of the 'wraith', a ghostly apparition associated with death in Irish folklore.[6] The video takes the form of a point-of-view shot, tracing a route along a deserted, overgrown rural road, interspersed with cutaways to oblique and unsettling images that could belong to memory or the imagination. The central theme and use of steadicam situates *Ghost Story* in relation to a cinematic tradition that extends from *The Shining* to more

3 For further information on Hiller's project see Connarty and Lanyon, *Ghosting*, pp. 102–3. Chodzko's project is a 'Breaking Ground' commission. URL: http://www.breakingground.ie/listartists.asp [accessed 15 November 2007]

4 Fredric Jameson, *Signatures of the Visible* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 90.

5 Ibid.

6 For an analysis of this work that references both Irish literature and Derrida's exploration of the spectral, see Declan Long, 'Invisible matter', in *Ghost Story: Willie Doherty* (Belfast: Arts Council/British Council, 2007), pp. 17–23.

recent explorations of traumatic memory and repressed desire,[7] yet the form and content of the voiceover narration tends to highlight the cultural specificity of the wraith as a supernatural phenomenon.

Irvine's exploration of the supernatural is less clearly aligned with Irish folk culture; instead, the belief systems to which she alludes are either highly personal or otherwise difficult to localize. Many of her works are deliberately enigmatic, obliquely evoking popular film narratives; for instance, the single screen video *Ivana's Answers* (2001) features a reading of tea leaves in which images of birds feature prominently. Later this image is mirrored by shots of birds in an aviary, recalling scenes from Hitchcock's *The Birds* (1963) and hinting at the possibility of narrative closure. But the precise form of Ivana's enquiry is never fully revealed. Winged creatures also feature prominently within a more recent work. *In A World Like This* (2006), a multi-screen video installation that depicts a sanctuary for birds of prey (the Irish Raptor Research Centre). Although this work documents actual relationships between birds and their human handlers it is also replete with suggestions of the supernatural, such as the concept of the 'familiar'. The otherworldly quality of these creatures is amplified in the sound design and the dispersal of action across multiple screens; this creates the suggestion of invisible movement, as the birds seem to depart at one point and come to land elsewhere within the room.

The Silver Bridge, an earlier work, also features richly layered soundscapes and scenes of the 'animal kingdom' but it incorporates performances by actors along with overt references to the supernatural. The action takes place in several locations, including the Natural History Museum, the Phoenix Park, Dublin Zoo and Waterstown Park, site of the silver bridge itself, a decaying cast-iron structure also known as the Guinness Bridge because of its association with the Guinness estate.[8] *The Silver Bridge* was acquired by the Irish Museum of Modern Art in 2004 and exhibited the following year, installed in a series of interlinked rooms on the first floor. As the windows were covered by light filters, rather than wholly obscured, the installation space offered a partial view of the parkland surrounding the Museum, enabling a degree of orientation in relation to the geography of Dublin.

The Silver Bridge could be described as a series of vignettes featuring both human and non-human protagonists and much of the imagery is oblique but suggestive. In one of the first projections to be encountered, a flock of starlings circles overhead, suggesting a form of wordless communication. The work also incorporates more conventional references to the supernatural: two bats clinging to the roof of a large cage seem to huddle together as though for comfort, while elsewhere a herd of deer stands in a forest amongst white wooden doors that suggest portals to other worlds. A sense of stasis pervades many of these settings, as though both humans and animals are waiting for something. In one scene, a young man sits below a tree while elsewhere (in a different era) a young woman observes bats in a Bat House decorated with a vaguely

7 *Ghost Story* was shot by Seamus McGarvey, director of photography on a range of high-profile features including *Atonement* (Joe Wright, 2007), which incorporates an elaborate steadicam sequence exploring the central character's sense of temporal and spatial dislocation just before his own death.

8 The bridge is located on public property and a brief history of the area is included in *Towards a Liffey Valley Park*, a development plan published by South Dublin County Council in November 2006. See South Dublin County Council. URL: www.sdublincoco.ie/index.aspx?pageid=3670 [accessed 15 November 2007].

gothic mural. In another sequence a woman surveys the collections of the Natural History Museum from a height, the exaggeratedly slow movements of her eyes recalling half-remembered fragments of other narratives, such as *La Jetée* (Chris Marker, 1962). Finally, the stasis is broken in two sequences filmed with 'day-for-night' techniques; in the first, a woman creeps on all fours across the silver bridge, as though pulling herself along a horizontal ladder. In the second, she suspends herself from the structure alongside another female figure and together they enact a careful yet acrobatic embrace before finally dropping, noiselessly, into the valley below. This is the only sequence to incorporate special effects (in the form of compositing), and both the human figures and the bridge are subtly dislocated from their surroundings.

Irvine has cited the short story 'Carmilla' by the Irish writer Sheridan Le Fanu as a source for certain elements within *The Silver Bridge*. Published in 1872 as part of the collection *In a Glass Darkly*, the story includes overt references to lesbian sexuality and is widely acknowledged as a precursor to Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (published almost thirty years later).[9] The events described in 'Carmilla' are embedded within a complex array of framing narratives, but the central sequence is narrated by Laura, a naive English girl living with her father in a remote part of Europe. When a mysterious aristocrat arrives in distress she is sheltered by Laura's family and the two become deeply attached until, at the climax, Carmilla's true identity as a vampire is revealed. The action takes second place to Le Fanu's exploration of forbidden desire, however, and much of the narrative concerns Laura's struggle to repress her feelings for Carmilla.

Le Fanu's writing is also marked by a fascination with displacement in relation to ideas of home and belonging. The story of Carmilla takes place within an era marked by social upheaval, associated with the Napoleonic Wars and, in this world, the vampire exists as a revenant, irrevocably bound to a point of ancestral origins (the family burial ground). *In a Glass Darkly* also explores settings that are closer to Le Fanu's home, and the shifting architecture of Dublin city figures within 'The Familiar', the story of a captain who has returned from the sea but cannot escape the ghosts of his past. Walking through areas of the city under construction, the captain sees the ghost of a crewmember he once mistreated, and he is haunted from that day on right up to his death.[10]

Irvine is not the only artist working with multi-screen installation to be influenced by nineteenth-century gothic melodrama; Jane Philbrick has identified this genre as a recurrent point of reference in the work of Eija-Liisa Ahtila. As Philbrick notes, Ahtila frequently depicts female characters who are 'perched on the edge of mental and emotional collapse',[11] and often uses special effects to represent their inner worlds. In *Love is a Treasure* (2002), a series that includes *The House* and *The Bridge*, Ahtila draws upon the personal narratives of women who have experienced some kind of psychosis, including hallucinations or phobias.

9 See W.J. McCormack, 'Irish gothic and after (1820–1945)', in Seamus Deane (ed.), *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Volume II (Derry: Field Day Publications, 1991), p. 832.

10 See J. Sheridan Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly* (1872) (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1995), p. 36.

11 Jane Philbrick, 'Subcutaneous melodrama: the work of Eija-Liisa Ahtila', *Performing Arts Journal*, no. 74 (2003), p. 34.

Although Philbrick acknowledges that these works are sometimes presented in single-screen format, she suggests that the multi-screen installation structure is integral to Ahtila's exploration of narrative, offering possibilities for interaction, choice and collectivity that extend the exploration of female desire and subjectivity often associated with stage and screen melodrama. There are parallels between the work of Ahtila and Irvine. Ahtila's *The Bridge* (2002) actually includes a sequence in which a young woman, traumatized by memories of sexual abuse, experiences temporary paralysis on a busy suburban bridge. She eventually forces herself to crawl across the structure on her knees so that she can collect her child from school. *The Silver Bridge* is a far less personal narrative, however, and the extension of the timeframe beyond the lifecycle of an individual would seem to align Irvine's exploration of the supernatural more closely with the ghost story.

As already suggested, *The Silver Bridge* is structured as a journey with several possible routes rather than an overtly immersive experience, and in this respect it is at odds with prevailing tendencies in moving-image installation. In an *October* roundtable discussion on 'The projected image in contemporary art' from 2003, several contributors comment upon the turn towards immersive, or 'cinematic', modes of installation in the 1990s, suggesting that this development signals a shift away from the sculptural and spatial concerns of artists' film and video in the 1960s and 1970s. Hal Foster, for example, notes the emergence of an overtly pictorialist mode of exhibition in which the apparatus of projection is often obscured,[12] while Anthony McCall states: 'I'm often struck by how in these installations with projected film and video, the gallery visitors are motionless. Of course, what's happening is that, in fact, they're not installations at all, in the original sense of being . . . about sculptural space.'[13]

Yet even this 'motionless' state may not signal a durational engagement on the part of the visitor. Jeffrey Skoller argues that durational viewing of individual pieces rarely occurs within the space of the gallery, precluding the creation of a 'subversive space . . . in which images can open into the flow of time as an engaged reflective experience of thought'.[14] Skoller does acknowledge that moving-image installation can engage aspects of political history through the evocation of place and, as an example of this, he cites the Wilsons' *Stasi City*. Ultimately, however, he remains suspicious of this work, suggesting that it 'leaves unaddressed crucial questions about how images of spaces that were historically used for such tyrannical purposes have been transformed into highly aestheticized works, unproblematically situated within the commodifying contexts of high culture'.[15] An alternative position has, however, been developed by Catherine Fowler, in an exploration of the reflective possibilities of the 'gallery film' that identifies continuities between the work of Maya Deren and that of artists working with multi-screen installation, such as Ahtila.[16]

12 Hal Foster, in George Baker et al., 'Roundtable: the projected image in contemporary art', *October*, no. 104 (2003), p. 75.

13 Anthony McCall, in Baker et al., 'Roundtable', p. 76.

14 Jeffrey Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards: Making History in Avant-garde Film*, (Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota University Press, 2005), p. 177.

15 Ibid., p. 179.

16 Catherine Fowler, 'Room for experiment: gallery films and vertical time from Maya Deren to Eija-Liisa Ahtila', *Screen*, vol. 45, no. 4 (2004), pp. 324 –43.

Clearly, Skoller's critique raises issues that extend beyond the scope of this article into wider debates concerning site, place and the institutional context of contemporary art practice.[17] Nonetheless, the persistence of the supernatural within such disparate works as *Stasi City*, *Ghost Story* and *The Silver Bridge* may offer a starting point from which to begin to theorize the relationship between the space of moving image installation and the place of exhibition. If the ghost story signals the return of a repressed collective cultural memory, then perhaps the museum itself could be read as the 'haunted house' of film and video installation. The rise of the multi-screen installation since the early 1990s has been paralleled by another development: the reinvention of former industrial sites as cultural destinations, in the form of contemporary art museums.

This process of reinvention can involve the embrace of the new, as in the case of the Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, but it can also encompass the prominent showcasing of the industrial past, as in the case of giant Turbine Hall at Tate Modern in London.[18] A postindustrial site was also proposed for the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin, at a site near the former docklands (now predominantly a financial district). This site was, however, rejected in favour of a seventeenth-century neoclassical building (the Royal Hospital Kilmainham) that once provided a home for retired soldiers.[19] The Museum opened in 1991 and occupies part of the Hospital, which continues to be maintained as a heritage site with the largest rooms reserved for corporate or state use.[20] Some of the exhibition spaces, such as those used to display *The Silver Bridge*, are relatively small, consisting of interlinked rooms.

When viewed within this context, certain aspects of Irvine's installation seem to acquire a new meaning. In particular, the decaying cast-iron bridge seems to offer an oblique reminder of an industrial past not yet wholly recuperated within the discourse of urban cultural regeneration. As I have suggested, Irvine's work parallels a broader exploration of the supernatural within moving image installation, in which repressed or hidden histories are repeatedly figured through images of ghosts, wraiths or even vampires. Within this world, even familiar landmarks such as a decaying bridge can become dislocated from the realm of the everyday, simultaneously existing within the past, the present, and an imagined future.

17 See the discussion of site and place in Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004).

18 For a critique of the 'Bilbao effect', see Hal Foster, *Design and Crime and Other Diatribes* (London: Verso, 2002), pp. 27–43.

19 See Niamh Ann Kelly, 'Looking over its shoulder: ten years at the Irish Museum of Modern Art', *Circa*, no. 95 (2001), pp. 16–17.

20 Several works by the Irish artist James Coleman, acquired by the Museum in 2004, have recently been shown in the Great Hall in a significant departure from convention. These include the slide installation *Lapsus Exposure* (1992–94), shown in July–August 2007 and *I N I T I A L S* (1993–94), shown in July–August 2006.

Lip and *Love*: subversive repetition in the pastiche films of Tracey Moffatt

SARAH SMITH

Moving image art since the 1990s has often expressed a fascination with classical Hollywood cinema, employing strategies that range from allusion to direct quotation in its attempts to revise Hollywood imagery, forms and conventions, and the values that these enshrine.[1] Such promiscuous practices of regurgitation are often characterized as parasitical and purely derivative, expressive of a late capitalist cynicism that permeates every aspect of culture; a characterization, in fact, largely attributable to the influential theories of Fredric Jameson.[2] This diagnosis of appropriation practices in contemporary culture as relatively impotent and indicating the impossibility of innovation has proved hugely influential, overshadowing discussions of their capacity to critique the forms and images they invoke.

The cinematic text is resituated in a variety of ways in contemporary art, but rather than viewing this as a simple gesture of imitation for its own sake or for nostalgic purposes, I shall suggest that cinema is hereby subjected to what theorist Linda Hutcheon terms a 'complicitous critique'.[3] For, while parodic reframings do carry with them many of the conventions and values of the original text, they do so only as a prerequisite for critique.

I shall explore this claim by focusing on two short films by the Australian artist Tracey Moffatt – *Lip* (1999, 11 mins) and *Love* (2003, 21 mins) – and propose that they demonstrate a productive intersection between parodic repetition, described by Judith Butler as a key strategy for queering (disrupting) normative categories of identity, and composite pastiche which, contrary to its many theorizations, is particularly well placed to produce a critical transformation of the texts it cites.

1 Contemporary art's fetishization of Hollywood cinema has been highlighted by a number of influential exhibitions in recent years: *Scream and Scream Again: Film in Art* at the Museum of Modern Art Oxford in 1996; *Hall of Mirrors: Art and Film Since 1945* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, in 1996; *Spellbound: Art and Film* at the Hayward Gallery in 1996; *Notorious* at the Museum of Modern Art Oxford in 1999; *Cinéma Cinéma: Contemporary Art and the Cinematic Experience* at the Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, in 1999; *Cut: Film as Found Object in Contemporary Art* at the Milwaukee Art Museum in 2004.

2 Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism and consumer society', in *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983–1998* (London: Verso, 1998), p. 7.

3 Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 106, 151.

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Combining these strategies, Moffatt's films construct their critiques from the very material they appraise.

In *Gender Trouble* Judith Butler argues that certain statements are repetitively enunciated in representation, and in our everyday social interactions and rituals (which constitute a type of representation), which has the propagandistic effect of making them invisible or of making them seem like indisputable matters of fact.[4] Similarly, in *The Location of Culture* Homi Bhabha describes the stereotype as a 'major discursive strategy' that must be 'anxiously repeated'[5] in order to present marks of gender and/or racial difference as indicative of essential inferiority and to combat the paradoxical failure of discourse to *prove* precisely that. The effect of the stereotype is to produce a kind of probable truth or predictability, which for Bhabha is always 'in excess of what can be empirically proved or logically construed'.[6] There is, in other words, something that necessarily evades the stereotype, a mismatch between logic and culturally insisted-upon 'truths', and that schism is the driver for its constant iteration. However, Butler suggests that these practices of repetition that permeate and shape culture and dictate social norms, can be turned back on themselves, can offer opportunities for subversive repetition that contest the very 'truths' or 'natural facts' such practices establish.[7] The two familiar cinematic stereotypes that Moffatt's films contest are that 'black women are subservient to white women' and that 'heterosexual romantic love necessitates violence towards women'. Moffatt's films use repetition to reframe, and in the process to denaturalize and repoliticize, a host of images that inscribe these very stereotypes.

Butler's description of 'the subversive laughter' of the 'pastiche-effect of parodic practices in which the original, and the authentic, the real are themselves constituted as effects'[8] explicitly challenges Jameson's dismissal of pastiche as the humourless imitation of an original that, by simply mimicking it, relinquishes the distance necessary for transformation, which is a key aspect of its superior relative, parody. However, Butler sees the pastiche's declaration that both original and copy are indistinguishable as a cause for celebration. Numerous other theorists have persuasively challenged the ascendancy of Jamesonian renditions of pastiche – a notable recent example is provided by Richard Dyer's *Pastiche*.[9] In this book, Dyer joins other scholars such as Linda Hutcheon, Margaret A. Rose, Dan Harries and Ingeborg Hoesterey in offering a broader interpretation of pastiche and arguing for its critical potential in certain forms.[10] In other words, these writers assert that while there may be greater distance between the parody and its target text than there is between the pastiche and the text it imitates, a prescribed degree of distance is not a prerequisite for critical engagement with the ur-text. The only certain difference between parody and pastiche, it seems, is formal, and this formal difference is not commensurate with a difference in their capacity for critique.

4 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (London: Routledge, 1999).

5 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 94–5.

6 Ibid.

7 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 188.

8 Ibid., pp. 186–7.

9 Richard Dyer, *Pastiche* (London: Routledge, 2006).

10 Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1985); Margaret A. Rose, *Parody: Ancient, Modern and Post-modern* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Dan Harries, *Film Parody* (London: British Film Institute, 2000); Ingeborg Hoesterey, *Pastiche: Cultural Memory in Art, Film and* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001).

Both Butler and Dyer concentrate on pastiche as imitation, such as in the case of drag, but Dyer also outlines the other key type of pastiche, 'pastiche as combination',[11] which involves the compilation of fragments of preexisting texts, and this is the type of pastiche predominantly employed by Moffatt in her found-footage films. Compilation films take fragments of preexisting film, rip them from their context and reposition them in new compositions that interrogate those fragments and their origins in a variety of ways. In *Recycled Images*, William C. Wees describes the effect of this tearing gesture as *interrupted context*, which relates both to the textual strategy of removing fragments from their original context and juxtaposing them in a new text, and the actual resituation of the cinematic text into the gallery space.[12] Such interruption, for Wees, puts 'conceptual quotation marks around material and encourages the viewer to see it differently and think about it more critically – which is to say, more politically'.[13] Found-footage film installed in the gallery is, therefore, a kind of critical rewriting of dominant cinema by contemporary art practice. Both *Lip* and *Love* comprise a recombination of clips directly sampled from Hollywood cinema, a common tendency in artists' films today. Significantly, Dyer asserts that these recombined texts are careful to maintain the identity of each fragment, emphasizing the act of tearing from one source and pasting into another that is the principal method of pastiche. In other words, for Dyer, the memory of the original source from which each element has been culled remains accessible to the reader, which is essential for the pastiche to produce an effective critique of the texts it combines. Traces of origins act as a guarantee of the critique of those origins and provide an opportunity for the filmmaker to position herself in relation to them.

In keeping with Dyer's definition of pastiche, each clip incorporated by *Lip* and *Love* clearly stands apart from every other. In addition to the discernible cut that joins them, one simple distinction between clips is that some are in colour while others are in black and white, but there are many other obvious formal indicators of difference (in terms of film stock, age of film, cinematography, directorial style, and so on). Another conspicuous mark of the shift from one clip to another is that the characters are different in each of the films, though some actors appear in more than one of the films quoted. For instance, in *Lip* Hattie McDaniel, the actress who spent her career typecast by Hollywood in the 'mammy' role, appears in at least five of the films quoted, most famously *Gone With the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939), where she plays a character actually called 'Mammy'. While this typecasting does create some confusion for the spectator in differentiating between the various films cited, that confusion serves a useful purpose here, emphasizing the repetition of the mammy role and its limitations, in terms of it being both the only option for many black actresses in Hollywood and the advocated appearance of the black maid (McDaniel's corpulent frame clearly fulfilled a key criterion).

11 Dyer, *Pastiche*, p. 9.

12 William C. Wees, *Recycled Cinema* (New York, NY: Anthology Film Archives, 1993), pp. 53–4.

13 Ibid., p. 55.

The obvious separateness of each sampled clip also serves the purpose of suppressing many of the essential formal operations of cinema, thereby avoiding the spectator's immersion in the film narrative. In a point that recalls Wees's comments on interrupted context, Slavoj Žižek states that a disruption of the 'appearance of seamless continuity', by interrupting the usual process of cinematic suture, is characteristic of various avant-garde film practices that aim to defamiliarize cinematic conventions.[14] While the discrete shot/reverse-shot sequences draw us in, jumping between shots and sequences from different films is disorienting, as the spectator becomes invested in one scene and one set of characters only to be torn away and catapulted into the next, similar but distinct, scene or shot.

It is vital to Moffatt's critique of the enduring reductive stereotyping of Hollywood that her films demonstrate the frequent appearance of particular character types and narrative patterns across a number of texts over a significant period of time. It is essential, therefore, that the spectator can discern both the number of different film texts quoted from and the duration of the historical period represented. For instance, *Lip* comprises fifty-six film clips, though a few films are quoted from more than once, and spans a period of between forty to fifty years, including films such as *China Seas* (Tay Garnett, 1935) and *For Pete's Sake* (Peter Yates, 1974). *Love* comprises over two hundred clips and spans roughly fifty years, including clips from *The Women* (George Cukor, 1939) and *Picture Perfect* (Glenn Gordon Caron, 1997). Each clip in these pastiche films is distinct, its beginning and end eminently evident and its source discernible; in contrast, it is the *similarity* of the narrative content of the clips that is accentuated. Each clip is distinct, but en masse their affiliation in terms of subject matter is conspicuous. Contesting Jamesonian conceptions of the conditions necessary for parodic transformation of a text, the direct regurgitation of preexisting images and the *repetition of sameness* are key to Moffatt's subversion of representational norms. In her case, revelation takes the form of outing Hollywood as indisputably and ludicrously racist and sexist (and she makes this point emphatically, which is in part a source of the comedy).

As well as employing the device of pastiche as combination, Moffatt also uses pastiche as imitation in her condensed and exaggerated mimicry of the narrative structure of classical Hollywood cinema. *Lip* moves back and forth between sequences that splice together representative clips of the bossy black maid, some of which are overlaid with segments of Aretha Franklin's hit songs 'Chain of Fools' (1967) and 'Think' (1968) in place of the original dialogue. Although the structure of this earlier pastiche film is rather monotonous and lacks the dramatic curve of the classical Hollywood narrative, Moffatt does appoint it with a structure and a trajectory as well as a certain circularity. The film opens with the depiction of a particularly acerbic maid in *For Pete's Sake*, whose dialogue is inflected with an awareness of the civil rights movement that had revolutionized race relations in the USA from the late

14 Slavoj Žižek, 'Back to the suture', in *The Fright of Real Tears* (London: British Film Institute, 2001), p. 33.

1960s, and it ends with a short sequence of clips from films of the same era. These closing clips show young black women dancing in colourful clothing (in place of the maid's uniform that dominated previous segments), while Franklin repeatedly sings 'freedom' on the soundtrack; a musical counterpoint for these images of the liberated black woman.

Although in *Love* the soundtrack functions in a similar way to that in *Lip*, aiding the structuring of the film into cohesive segments, the film's mimicry of the Hollywood narrative structure is more developed than in the earlier film. Like *Lip*, *Love* opens with a series of clips that introduce and exemplify the focus of the film – the amorous embrace – and uses the original soundtrack of each clip. The saccharine dialogue amuses us, and is rendered even more comic by clumping together so many examples of the passionate clinch. In both films, both types of regurgitation – the repetition of stereotypes of womanhood and the imitation of the narrative structure of the classical Hollywood film – are repeated incessantly through the now conventional video installation device of the loop.

Lip comprises images of various cinematic stereotypes of black womanhood, such as the tragic mulatto and the soul diva, but mostly the domestic servant (sometimes slave), epitomized by the lippy mammy character. The mammy is a familiar figure of the white imagination: a figure of Otherness that elevates the white woman's social standing. The black woman who enters the white home is thus fixed as a figure of clownish exoticism, thereby dissipating the threat she poses by working in such intimate proximity to the white family. This 'devoted to white folks' headrag-wearing, shuffling, obese archetype is stripped of sex appeal and, at times, intelligence, which for film critic bell hooks denotes 'complete submission to the will of whites'.[15] Through processes of stereotyping, such as those augmented by Hollywood, the Negro is thus 'made palatable', in the words of Frantz Fanon.[16]

The scenes in *Lip* stage a battle of wills between the black maid and her white mistress, in which it is generally the black woman who gets the last word. The last word may be her only source of power, a mechanism for expressing anger or dissatisfaction with her lot. Yet, the last word is a limited sort of victory while the black woman remains tethered to her position of subservience. In fact, this 'lippiness' is part of a characterization of the black woman as resentful of her superior white mistress, serving to disconnect the two women further. In an essay on the mammy, E. Patrick Johnson describes the vacillating masks of deference and tempered hostility worn by the domestic servant in this complex relationship as constituting a kind of tactical performance, a role-playing that colludes with white privilege in its reproduction of racial stereotypes.[17] Extending Butler's thesis on the performativity of gendered identity to raced identity, Johnson identifies and endorses subversive appropriations of the stereotype.

hooks observes the historical exclusion of black women from representation and cinema's 'violent erasure of black womanhood',[18] stating that their only acceptable presence was as servants of whiteness,

15 bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (London: Pluto, 1981), p. 84.

16 Frantz Fanon, 'The negro and psychopathology', in *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 1986), p. 176.

17 E. Patrick Johnson, 'Nevah had uh cross word', in *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 105–10.

18 bell hooks, 'The oppositional gaze: black female spectators', in *Reel to Reel: Race, Sex and Class at the Movies* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 201.

and of white womanhood in particular. The subjugation of the black woman *serves* to elevate the white woman to the status of object of the male gaze; a dubious honour indeed, as keenly observed in Moffatt's other film *Love*. The US film scholar Patricia Mellencamp describes the generally subservient role played by women in Hollywood in her summary of the claim made emphatically by 1970s film feminists: 'Whether white and present or black and absent, women were there to serve'.[19] By repeating the love scene, *Love* maps the cinematic history of the white woman who has been standardized as the supreme object of desire. In all but two of the clips included, the 'desired' women are white and in the exceptions where she is black she is 'appropriately' paired with a black man. Like all exceptions, these ones prove the rule. For hooks, in cinema, 'glamour, beauty, sensuality and sexuality, desirability are all coded as white'.[20]

The other significant (and related) point compounded by the repeated imagery in *Love* is the connection between love and violence in popular narratives. To quote hooks again, cinema has repeatedly asked women 'to accept the idea that violence intensifies sexual pleasure'.[21] There is an escalation of violence in *Love* that portrays the so-called love bond between a man and a woman as a power struggle, a battle, with the conflict initiated by the man and ended when the woman finally reaches for a gun, metaphorically taking the phallus and thereby becoming the loathsome 'castrating bitch' that these Oedipal narratives construct her as. The brutality begins as verbal debasement and rejection. For instance, in one rather dismissive and callous attack that directly conflates sex and violence, the female character tells her male lover 'You're so cruel', to which he responds 'Cruel? I haven't touched you yet.' In another odious piece of dialogue a male character tells his cowering lover: 'That's right. Be afraid of me, a little afraid at least. A woman's no good to a man unless she's a little afraid of him.'

While Moffatt mockingly imitates the contrived conclusions of dominant cinema, none of her work proposes an alternative vision of race relations outside of binary oppositions, and her own transformation of these through a combination of replication and deviation. She may allude to the possibility of an alternative but refuses to make that manifest, preferring instead what Butler describes as:

> the parodic inhabiting of conformity that subtly calls into question the legitimacy of the command, a repetition of the law into hyperbole, a rearticulation of the law against the authority of the one who delivers it.[22]

Race signifies in particular ways, and while Moffatt's work draws on stereotypes, it exaggerates and reframes them through a process of parodic repetition, contending that effective critique necessitates working with and through popular cultural artefacts, not disregarding them in favour of utopian alternative visions. Butler insists that we must work with preexisting discursive practices, and therefore 'The task is not whether to repeat, but how to repeat', in order to produce what she calls a

19 Patricia Mellencamp, 'A fine romance, with no kisses: discourse, not intercourse', in *A Fine Romance: Five Ages of Feminism* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1995), p. 16.

20 bell hooks, 'Good girls look the other way', in *Reel to Reel*, p. 14.

21 bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Cambridge MA: South End Press, 1984), p. 124.

22 Judith Butler, 'Gender is burning: questions of appropriation and subversion', in Sue Thornham (ed.), *Feminist Film Theory: a Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 337.

'radical proliferation' of the stereotype, which has the effect of displacing it, of making manifest the schism between the stereotype and the logic it purports to represent.[23] Moffatt's films insist on the historical contingency of the 'naturalized' images they reframe. In his essay 'Postmodernism/postcolonialism' Bhabha poses the question: 'How do we use the rules and ruses of historical contingency and cultural indeterminacy to transform the inequitable and injurious *necessities* of history?'[24] I hope that I have demonstrated that Moffatt's particular combination of subversive repetition and composite pastiche provides one credible response to this question.

23 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 189.

24 Homi Bhabha, 'Postmodernism/postcolonialism', in Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (eds), *Critical Terms for Art History* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 450.

dossier

Stalking the image: Margaret Tait and intimate filmmaking practices

SARAH NEELY

I used to lie in wait to see the clover open
Or close,
But never saw it.
I was too impatient,
Or the movement is too subtle,
Imperceptible
And more than momentary.[1]

Margaret Tait's artistic concern with the detail of the everyday shares much with general conceptions of feminist filmmaking practices, in which self-expression is identified as an antidote to the oversimplified representations of women in mainstream cinema. As Pam Cook explains, the 'emphasis on the personal, the intimate and the domestic, has always been important to the Women's Movement and the personal diary form, for instance, has always been a means of self-expression for women to whom other avenues were closed'.[2] While Tait maintained she was filming what was around her rather than attempting any kind of autobiographical work, the body of her work, including film poems, portraits and hand-painted films, is frequently praised for its ability to capture the 'authenticity' of experience.

David Curtis describes Tait as 'Britain's Marie Menken', the two filmmakers' work sharing 'a clarity of vision and a simplicity – almost naivete – of technique: shots held "too long"; hand-held camera not always perfectly still or level; frequent and abrupt in-camera edits, and a fondness for simple, intimate subject matter'.[3] But like Menken, or other comparable filmmakers such as Gunvor Nelson or Chick Strand, whose

1 Margaret Tait, 'Now', *Origins and Elements* (Edinburgh: Margaret Tait, 1959), pp. 22-4.

2 Pam Cook, 'The point of self-expression in avant-garde film', in John Caughie (ed.), *Theories of Authorship* (London: British Film Institute, 1981), p. 272.

3 David Curtis, 'Britain's oldest experimentalist . . . Margaret Tait', *Vertigo*, no. 9 (1999), p. 62.

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daring efforts of experimentation Robin Blaetz points out were historically misinterpreted as amateurish,[4] Tait's work has been marginalized at various points in time, across a number of contexts.

When Tait returned to Scotland in the early 1950s, eager to work after completing her studies at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematographia in Rome, Scottish film culture was slow to acknowledge the filmmaker whose focus on smaller subjects failed to register within the general aims of the Films of Scotland committee. Tait approached John Grierson on a number of occasions and in 1954 invited him to her Rose Street Film Festival, an event held annually to run alongside the Edinburgh Festival, but although Grierson was appreciative of her films at the festival, nothing ever came of it.[5] Correspondence between Grierson and Tait reveals Tait's pragmatic intentions. Her main reason for approaching him is to seek assistance with financing and distribution, not to confirm her artistic practices. When Grierson suggested that *Orquil Burn* (1955), a film that takes the meandering path of a burn in her native Orkney as the basis for its structure, could be reworked into a 'brief abstract film of burn patterns', Tait remained committed to her initial ideas for the material, writing that Grierson's suggestion for the film 'might be very pretty, but it would not by my view of Orquil Burn, and I think it will be more satisfying in the end to retain the form I intended for it'.[6]

Recent feminist film scholarship continues the important project of recovering lost film histories, but there is also an urgent need to address the reasons for their having been overlooked in the first place. As Lauren Rabinovitz discusses in relation to the future of feminist film studies, more is required:

> The radical politics of lost-and-found scholarship lies not in merely correcting a record that swept away women's contributions but in refashioning film theory and historiography. It develops a women's history that teaches the centrality of intimate, personal and sexual issues, as well as of the spheres of the everyday that embrace subjects with lesser cultural status.[7]

Although it is generally argued that from the 1970s onwards feminist film studies was divided by two conflicting concerns, one with 'immediate documentation' and the other with 'apparatus',[8] or crudely summarized as the historical and the theoretical, Rabinovitz argues the need for both, that it is not enough to fill in the gaps in history.

In the case of Margaret Tait, while the posthumous restoration of many of her films, and an international touring exhibition accompanied by a DVD and book-length study of the filmmaker's work[9] are all promising indications that her significant artistic contributions are now recognized, it does not mean that a similar scenario will not play out again. With hindsight, praise is easy to give. Most of Tait's work was self-funded, enabled by her work as a GP. In all aspects of her filmmaking practice she was meticulous in her organization and planning. On more than one occasion, the Scottish Film Archive commented on how its restoration of

4 Robin Blaetz, 'Rescuing the fragmentary evidence of women's experimental film', *Camera Obscura* (63), vol. 21, no. 3 (2006), p. 154.

5 For a more detailed account of the relationship between Tait and Grierson, see Sarah Neely, 'Contemporary Scottish cinema', in Neil Blain and David Hutchison (eds), *The Media in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), pp. 151-65.

6 Margaret Tait to John Grierson, 14 February 1956, Grierson Archive, University of Stirling, G6/39/12.

7 Lauren Rabinovitz, 'The future of feminism and film history', *Camera Obscura* (61), vol. 21, no. 1 (2006), p. 42.

8 Teresa De Lauretis, 'Rethinking women's cinema: aesthetics in feminist theory', in Diane Carson, Linda Dittmar and Janice R. Welsch (eds), *Multiple Voices in Feminist Film Criticism* (Minneapolis, MN and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), p. 141.

9 Benjamin Cook and Peter Todd (eds), *Subjects and Sequences: Margaret Tait Reader* (London: Lux, 2004).

her films was greatly aided by the instructions provided by the copious and detailed notes Tait kept. She was also thorough in her approach to funding. Numerous applications were made to a variety of funding bodies, but she was successful only on a couple of occasions, and just two out of over thirty films that she produced were made with award money.[10] The funding bodies that rejected applications to fund Tait's work, in general, tended to focus their response on Tait's idiosyncratic form and style, often pointing out specific ways in which her personal vision diverged from accepted professional practices. While it is easy to admire the experimental style that developed throughout her work, it seems highly probable that if Tait were just starting out today, the obstacles and responses to her work would not be very different to those she faced in 1950s Scotland. Although debates around representation have moved progressively away from uniform notions of Scotland to the more inclusive and diverse 'Scotlands', there remains a tendency on behalf of funding bodies to favour projects that to some extent engage with the bigger issues of national identity. Ultimately, as Tait's experience proves, this means that avant-garde works that do not engage with identity, or important feminist discourses relating to the domestic or the personal, essentially become invisible. The recent financial investment in Tait's films is clearly a positive step, but because of its archival nature it is difficult to argue persuasively that the interest goes far beyond that of cultural artefact.

10 The Scottish Arts Council's 'Filmmaker as artist' competition in 1974 financed *Colour Poems* and The Orkney Education Committee financed *The Drift Back* in 1956 to be shown on their rural film circuit.

During her lifetime, Tait's films generated most interest outwith Scotland. In the 1970s her work was screened at a number of avant-garde and independent film festivals and screenings in England. Tait's refusal to conform to accepted filmmaking practice may have meant her work was rejected in funding applications, but it was celebrated by practitioners. The fact that someone had been making films independently since the 1950s, in Edinburgh and later Orkney, without support and without compromising their unique vision or style, was a central component of the praise.

David Curtis talks about *Portrait of Ga* (1952), the first film Tait made after returning from Rome, as the earliest of her films to bear what he refers to as her 'authentic imprint'.[11] The film of Tait's mother, the Ga of the film's title, was, as with most of Tait's work, made with the 16 mm bolex camera that she purchased while a student in Rome. 16 mm is frequently associated with intimate filmmaking, and although a few of her films were shot using a tripod – such as *Rose Street* (1956) – most of them, this one included, make use of the free-floating capabilities of handheld. The camera follows the filmmaker's mother, wandering, sometimes dancing, on the hillside by a croft. Decentred framing inhibits the privileging of any one focal point, while the camera's tendency to linger on details such as Ga unwrapping a boiled sweet imbues the diminutive gesture with an importance generally linked to feelings of intimacy and familiarity. Tait captures similar moments of intimacy in her film portrait of Hugh MacDiarmid, made in 1964. The film depicts the more playful gestures of the writer: shots of MacDiarmid teetering

11 Curtis, 'Britain's oldest experimentalist', p. 63.

along an Edinburgh kerb as if on a tightrope or mischievously skipping stones into the sea are images that a more formal depiction might choose to overlook or subordinate. Tait, who described her technique of 'breathing' with the camera and liked to use Lorca's phrase 'stalking the image' in reference to her own practices,[12] allows the camera time to explore. As her poem 'Now', which opens this essay, articulates, she is preoccupied with catching the 'momentary', the 'subtle' gestures. Like the barely perceptible opening of the clover, Tait's breathing with the camera, or stalking of the image, aims to give pause to the image, allowing for – as is the case with both of these portrait films – a glimpse of the real person.

Perhaps disappointingly from a sociologist's perspective, Ga doesn't speak. Instead the subject is limited to the image that is framed by the story provided by the filmmaker's monologue, depicting her impressions of, and relationship to, the subject. The voiceover is intimate and personal, distinguishing it from traditional modes of documentary and clarifying its intentions as a subjective rather than an objective account. In other respects, Tait's inclusion of any voiceover at all sets it apart from the sort of documentary seen as vital for the feminist movement in its ability to represent 'real women'.[13] In one exception, *Land Makar* (1981), Tait's portrait of Mary Graham Sinclair, a neighbouring crofter whom Tait admired as a 'poet of the land' – the title's literal translation – there is no commentary. Instead, the soundtrack is largely composed of conversations between Tait and Sinclair. More in tune with the agenda to represent 'real women' in an open and objective manner, Tamara Krikorian describes the difficulty of understanding much of the Orcadian language, but praises the exchanges between Tait and Sinclair for giving the film 'its absolute authenticity'.[14] Although Tait insisted on allowing the words of her subject to tell the story in this film, the majority of her work foregrounds her own voice, her own personal reflections, and occasionally her poetry.

Even in relation to the image, where she remains largely unseen, the viewer is acutely aware of Tait's presence. For instance, in *Ga* there are obvious moments of interaction between subject and filmmaker: smiles are shared as words are exchanged, although the spectator is not privy to them. These types of exchange occur in a number of her films, often because the subjects are friends and family with whom she is familiar. In *Place of Work* (1976), a film surveying Tait's family home in Kirkwall, a postman arrives, sees he is interrupting Tait's filming, then shies away from the camera. In this instance, the soundtrack has been mixed and edited to create the effect of it having been recorded live, a technique Noël Burch commends for giving you the 'perfectly full sense of *being there*'.[15] Tait is heard on the soundtrack encouraging the postman to come in and get involved in the activity, but he is clearly self-conscious and reluctant.

Characteristically, Tait only appears in the film from behind the camera: materializing in mirrors, in other reflective surfaces, or cast in

12 Tamara Krikorian, '"On the Mountain" and "Land Makar": landscape and townscape in Margaret Tait's work', in Michael Mazere and Nina Danino (eds), *The Undercut Reader: Critical Writings on Artists' Film and Video* (London: Wallflower Press, 2002), p. 103.

13 Annette Kuhn, *Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema*, second edition (London: Verso, 1994).

14 Tamara Krikorian, 'Margaret Tait', in David Curtis (ed.), *A Dictionary of British Film and Video Artists* (Luton: University of Luton and The Arts Council of England), p. 191.

15 Noël Burch, 'Narrative/diegesis – thresholds, limits', *Screen*, vol. 23, no. 2 (1982), p. 31.

shadowy form by rays of light. Although the film is essentially dealing with the intimate details of her daily life, its central concern lies in its close exploration of Tait's relationship to the physical space. The camera navigates through the everyday landscape in a way that belies her own familiarity with it, but there are no attempts to contextualize any of what we see with autobiographical detail.

David Curtis remarked that 'it was her transparent technique that struck a chord with the English "materialists"; she revealed, rather than concealed, the means of production; she worked, like them, at an artisanal level'.[16] Although Tait's work is concerned with the material possibilities of film, the decision to bring herself into the film seems to be more a natural part of storytelling than politically informed. The conviction with which Tait expresses the resonances within her own personal perspective and the general integrity of her filmmaking practices, illustrated by her correspondence with Grierson, underlies much of the praise describing her work as 'authentic'. As her husband, writer Alex Pirie, explains:

> Unlike so much that is called experimental and avant garde, her films are not mere exercises in perception. Her film images are accessible (a thistle is invariably a thistle). They are of the everyday, and, at one level, a presentation of things as they are. But in their framing, in their rhythmical patterning, in their duration, these images offer a vision of the mystery and ambiguity inherent in so-called common objects.[17]

The 'aura of authenticity' accompanying the everyday has achieved greater cultural currency in recent times. Tracey Emin's unmade bed, 'My bed' (1997), was met with cynicism but was greatly successful in its ability to question the value of authenticity in relation to mundane, albeit somewhat taboo, aspects of the everyday.[18] But where Emin's work structures itself in the mode of the confessional, 'foregrounding and exploiting the autobiographical',[19] in Tait's work the autobiographical content comes as a consequence of filming what is around her. While her voice might imply authorship in her films, she is never fully seen. The films might be self-referential, but they are never fully autobiographical.

Tait had two biographical television programmes made about her during her lifetime, one for BBC Scotland's Spectrum series in 1979 and the other a Channel 4 profile in 1983, neither of which she was happy with. She felt the programmes were more concerned with her than with the films themselves. She was similarly dismayed in 1992 with the release of her first and only feature film, *Blue Black Permanent*, when more was written about her age than about the actual film, *The Scottish Sun*, for example, printing the headline 'Mags, 73, in Blue movie!'[20] The film itself is an interesting example of Tait's treatment of autobiographical material. The narrative unfolds across separate times and places, the past and present of both Orkney and Edinburgh. Intricate flashbacks weave together the narratives of Barbara, a photographer who is haunted by the early death and suspected suicide of her mother, and

16 Curtis, 'Britain's oldest experimentalist', p. 63.

17 Alex Pirie, 'Margaret Tait: indications, influences, outcomes', *Poem Film Film Poem*, no. 6 (2000), p. 3.

18 Julie Watson and Sidonie Smith, 'Introduction: mapping women's self-representation at visual/textual interfaces', in Watson and Smith (eds), *Interfaces: Women, Autobiography, Image, Performance* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2002), pp. 1- 46.

19 Ibid., p. 3.

20 'Mags, 73, in Blue movie!', *Scottish Sun*, 4 June 1992.

Greta, the poet mother herself. The lives of the photographer, the poet and Andrew, an artist and friend of both, all reflect various aspects of Tait's own work and life. As Michael Romer suggests, the film 'allows her to create her own descendants, and recreate herself. Barbara reproduces some of Greta's characteristics, and hence some of Margaret's.'[21] But ultimately the device allows for a displacement of the self as object: she is there, but not wholly identifiable. The effect avoids a reductive biographical portrait, but on a social level it makes an interesting statement about the collective and shared or inherited experiences.[22]

It was only after her death that Tait's husband transferred the large collection of film cans from Tait's studio in Orkney to Scottish Screen Archive's offices in Glasgow. Although the archive contacted Tait about the preservation of her films during her lifetime, she remained uninterested. Similarly, when two women filmmakers from Glasgow Film and Video workshop contacted her about making a film portrait, her response was that too many of those had been made about her already and that they should really make portraits of each other.[23] For Tait, film was about the present rather than preservation. Like poetry, as the closing verse of her poem 'Now' illustrates, you have to keep doing it, it is a process.

The thing about poetry is you have to keep doing it.
People have to keep making it.
The old stuff is no use
Once it's old.
It comes out of the instant
And lasts for an instant.
  Take it now
  Quickly
  Without water.
There!
Tomorrow there'll be something else.

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21 Michael Romer, 'Poetry in *Blue Black Permanent*: three footnotes to Margaret Tait's film', *Cencrastus*, no. 82 (2006), p. 12.

22 Ian Goode, 'Scottish cinema and Scottish imaginings: *Blue Black Permanent* and *Stella Does Tricks*', *Screen*, vol. 46, no. 2 (2005), pp. 235-9.

23 Margaret Tait Collection, The Orkney Archive, Kirkwall, D97/40.

review

Daniel Frampton, *Filmosophy*. New York, NY and London: Wallflower, 2006, 254 pp.
Todd McGowan, *The Real Gaze: Film Theory After Lacan*. New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007, 254 pp.

RICHARD RUSHTON

In the opening line of *The Real Gaze*, Todd McGowan is undoubtedly correct to assert that 'Film theory today is almost nonexistent' (p. ix). His book, and Daniel Frampton's maverick manifesto *Filmosophy* along with it, represent bold attempts to rescue some territory for those film scholars who like to speculate on the far-flung possibilities of cinema – territory that has in recent times been given over to empiricism in one form or another. If the project of Film Theory was pronounced dead a little over a decade ago, then these books offer the challenge of bringing it back to life. It is inspiring to see theories as audacious as those presented by McGowan and Frampton making their way into film studies, for each of the books promises new ways of approaching the study and appreciation of films, and it is refreshing to see two authors staking their claims to theoretical novelty.

What, then, is novel about these books? Frampton's main contribution lies in his development of a notion of film thinking. Such thinking is emphatically not a matter of discerning the ways in which films have the capacity to make *us* think. Rather, Frampton understands film thinking as the thinking that *films themselves* engage in. Film thinking is something achieved by a film's mind (Frampton's penchant for neologisms leads him to coin the term 'filmind') and it is one of the major claims of *Filmosophy* that the kinds of minds which films have are radically different from human minds. He argues, for example, that 'The filmind thinks better than us, as well as thinking beyond us' (p. 92). In formulating his notion of the filmind, Frampton is indebted to a great

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number of film theorists (from Munsterberg, Dulac and Epstein up to Cavell, Perkins, Sobchack and others), but by far the greatest influences come from Sergei Eisenstein and Gilles Deleuze. His discussion of these theorists in Chapter 5 ('Neominds') is a high point of the book which takes readers from Eisensteinian ecstasy (that is, the capacity of film to take viewers outside themselves) up to a brilliantly explicated tripartite conception of Deleuze's approach to film thinking (from relation-images through mental-images to the image-as-concept). The excitement of these pages is breathtaking, for the reader genuinely feels on the path to uncovering an understanding of film that is significant and radically destabilizing (destabilizing in a profoundly positive way).

McGowan's approach could scarcely be more different than Frampton's. While the latter seems almost entirely unaware of discourses related to psychoanalysis (to the point where he favours the 'subconscious' over the 'unconscious'), McGowan, by contrast, is committed to reinventing psychoanalytic film theory. His challenge is to wrest Lacan from the betrayals of 1970s film theory so as to bring him into contact with the trends of more recent times. The key shift is made by taking Lacanian film theory out of the register of the imaginary and placing it fairly and squarely within the domain of the (Lacanian) real. McGowan argues that everything that has gone by the name of Lacanian film theory has rested on a fundamental misunderstanding of his theories. Where theorists have promulgated an understanding of cinema focused on the construction of an imaginary relation between spectator and screen (most notable in the theories of Christian Metz and Jean-Louis Baudry), McGowan argues that the spectator's encounter with what Lacan called the 'real' has been ignored. McGowan's position thus has major consequences. First of all, it enables him to argue that all of the criticisms aimed at Lacanian film theory have been arguing against an inept reading of Lacan. Secondly, it brings about the possibility of reconceptualizing the cinema spectator from within a psychoanalytic framework – that is, instead of the spectator being conceived as a masterful, but misrecognizing, imaginary dupe of cinematic ideology, she/he can be conceived as a void who encounters the real. McGowan expends a good deal of energy explaining this latter conception, but suffice to say that it turns previous Lacanian expositions of spectatorship on their heads: no longer is the psychoanalytic spectator an all-perceiving master of the cinematic spectacle, instead, she/he is a void or point of rupture that facilitates the emergence of the real.[1] Like Frampton, therefore, the stakes of McGowan's enterprise are exceptional – they aim to remap entirely the terrain on which film theory is exercised.

However, for all the enthusiasm and insight these books promise, each has limitations. The most disappointing aspect of Frampton's book stems from his analyses of actual films. A long discussion of central aspects of the practice of filmosophy is undertaken in Chapter 7 ('Film-thinking') in which some of the designations of earlier chapters (for example, the differences between 'basic film-thinking', 'formal film-thinking' and

1 McGowan acknowledges his predecessors in theorizing the Lacanian real: for example, Joan Copjec, 'The orthopsychic subject: film theory and the reception of Lacan', *October*, no. 49 (Summer 1989), pp. 53–71; Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989).

'fluid film-thinking) are brought to bear on concrete examples. But the examples fail to be grounded in adequate conceptions of just what it *is* that filmosophy is proposing to do. On the films of Michael Haneke, for instance, Frampton points out that 'This is aesthetically powerful cinema', while adding no conception of what 'aesthetically powerful' might mean (p. 140). He adds that 'this cinema is also striking and beautiful', but again there is no indication of how he is conceptualizing terms like 'striking' and 'beautiful', nor is there any explanation of why such insights are ones that necessarily need to be derived from the practice of filmosophy. When approaching the films of the Dardenne brothers, Frampton asserts that such films 'resist the conventions of classical fiction filmmaking' while, additionally, when watching the films, we are never encouraged to identify with the characters, but rather 'we must learn from what they do' (p. 147). Certainly, there is a sense in which Frampton's assertion here is more than likely correct, but there is no sustained attempt to present an argument which specifies the parameters of his claims. And why do such modes of film-thinking resist the conventions of classical film, for there might be any number of classical fiction films in which we learn from characters instead of identifying with them (in *Mr Smith Goes to Washington*, for example, do we learn from Jefferson Smith or identify with him; do we learn from Clarissa Saunders, or do we identify with her?). These are key questions, important ones, and Frampton fails to clarify precisely the ways in which filmosophy can illuminate our understanding of them. He may passionately decry that 'Filmosophy is about proposing a new way of understanding and experiencing film' (p. 149) or even more emphatically state that 'All film theorising and writing should be about helping the filmgoer *feel* the film's forms and actions and styles and meaning *directly*' (p. 109), but there is very little in *Filmosophy* that indicates precisely how one does filmosophy. Indeed, one of the few pointers Frampton gives is to suggest that filmosophy aims for 'an opinionated and personal form of film interpretation'; that is, opinions which eschew any claim to objectivity and instead are 'natural' and 'immediate' (pp. 178, 179). Such arguments seem to me to be thoroughly misguided, for why would Frampton construct an intricate philosophy of film only to then retreat into a pluralistic claim of 'any personal opinion will do'? The book certainly aims to be poetic and to capture the spirit of something that might be personal and immediate, but there are moments when Frampton's poetry becomes frustratingly opaque: 'With *The Thin Red Line* I remember drinking-in the thread of character thoughts – the filmind passing through the heads of its characters like a metaphysical bird' (pp. 176–7).

McGowan's approach is more systematic than Frampton's. *The Real Gaze* is composed of four sections, each of which brings a psychoanalytic formation to bear upon specific cinematic examples. The four categories are evaluative ones: Part I examines films which expose fantasy – that is, films which expose fantasy *as fantasy* and thereby undermine the power

of fantasy – McGowan claims this as a positive cinematic model; Part II analyzes films that present desire in all of its impossibility – again, this is a positive cinematic outcome; Part III is the bad seed of the book – films which aim to marry fantasy and desire, in other words, films that delude audiences by presenting the impossible (desire) as something that is possible (fantasy); finally, Part IV signals the highest achievements of the cinema – the ability to present encounters with the traumatic real. McGowan rhapsodically describes the power of this 'real gaze': 'Through this cinematic experience, we can glimpse the impossible. . . . After this encounter, the normal functioning of the world cannot continue in the same way and undergoes a radical transformation' (p. 177). This is undoubtedly a novel way of bringing an updated Lacan to the film theory table and McGowan's strategy is avowedly political. The politics of 'real gaze' are all about 'how cinema challenges our ideological interpellation rather than supporting it' (p. 171).

The problems with McGowan's approach begin to emerge here. Traditional Lacanian film theorists of the 1970s certainly, as McGowan attests, theorized a cinematic gaze as imaginary. However, this was precisely the *problem* with cinema that was identified by such theorists: it allowed real contradictions that exist in society to be magically resolved by the imaginary qualities of the cinematic gaze. Furthermore, such an imaginary gaze functioned ideologically to interpellate spectators as individual, mastering subjects. What psychoanalytic critics such as Jean-Louis Baudry, Laura Mulvey and Stephen Heath were at pains to specify were ways of *breaking down the imaginary gaze* in order to replace it with cinematic practices that could more adequately answer the political problems of patriarchal capitalism. As far as I can see, McGowan merely repeats this very argument. He specifies the worst aspects of cinema as belonging to a 'cinema of integration' – the classical Hollywood cinema – the major outcome of which is that 'it allows the subject to deceive itself concerning its actual status within ideology' (p. 119). Such a line would not find itself out of place in the writings of many from the 1970s and 1980s who railed against the ideological impediments of orthodox cinema. The major problem with McGowan's book, therefore, is that it offers an illusion of novelty when in reality we are presented with an argument that goes back many years in film studies.

Yet there are further problems. There are clear errors not only in McGowan's accounts of films but also in his interpretations of Lacanian psychoanalysis. His summations of, for example, Fellini's *8½*, Agnès Varda's *Cléo from 5 to 7* or Alain Resnais's *Hiroshima, mon amour* are inaccurate in glaring ways, while other analyses are far too easy to pick holes in (his account of *The Wizard of Oz* is remarkably simplistic). In short, McGowan's discussions of films are unconvincing. Insofar as Lacanian theory goes, McGowan fails to avoid the cursed problem of ahistoricality: he builds a Lacanian system in which all terms, such as gaze, real, fantasy and desire, are fixed for all time, while ideology and symbolic order likewise seem to be entirely unchanging edifices. But

even if this charge is ignored, there are major problems with many of McGowan's psychoanalytic conceptions. For example, in discussing the role of the father in Spielberg's films, he argues that 'The recognition that the symbolic father is a dead father frees the subject from the father's authority'. 'One need not obey a dead authority', he concludes (p. 138). But such a statement is entirely contrary to Freudian theory (see *Totem and Taboo*) as well as Lacanian psychoanalysis: the symbolic father obtains his authority precisely insofar as he is dead. That is why the 'name-of-the-father' is far more powerful than any actual, living father could be, for it is an emanation of authority that has no bodily or earthly presence, but which exerts authority in a thoroughly symbolic manner.

There are still more problems with McGowan's entire conception of the 'real gaze', but it is here that his and Frampton's books converge to reveal something of the spirit of the age. The worst sin that can be committed by a film theorist, Frampton argues, is that of reducing a film's mind to the human mind. He asserts again and again that 'film-thinking is not mappable in terms of human thinking' (p. 151); that film-thinking is 'trans-subjective' (pp. 84 ff.), that 'the filmind always thinks its own thoughts' (p. 85) or that film theorists have to date suffered from one fundamental flaw, that of 'limiting film to our realm of experience and thought' (p. 26). But I have to question quite why human thoughts are so inept in Frampton's scheme of things, while films seem infinitely thoughtful and are becoming more intelligent day by day. He approvingly quotes Stanley Cavell's claim that films can be envisaged as 'an expression of modern anonymity or privacy' (p. 166),[2] but then misinterprets this as an expression of desubjectivization – that what films see and think are non-human – whereas Cavell's point is manifestly the opposite: that what films have the capacity to invoke is precisely the way in which we are modern subjects, subjects who are defined by something called 'subjectivity' which renders us private, hidden, anonymous and imprisoned. Films can show us exactly this condition of subjectivity. For Cavell, films can also present us with ways of going beyond subjectivity, but they can do so in ways which are deeply human. In short, for someone like Cavell, the thinking of films is profoundly and intimately related to human thought, *and that is why films matter*. For Frampton, therefore, to willingly divorce human thought from the thinking of films is akin to throwing out the baby with the bathwater, for films may indeed 'think better than us', but the only thoughts they can produce which will matter to us are those that pertain to human subjects.

This wish to expunge subjectivity from film thinking carries through to the ways in which Frampton characterizes the kinds of thoughts it is possible for us to have by way of filmosophy. We are urged to recognize film thoughts as 'emotional and effective' (p. 177) rather than rational or cognitive, as 'a movement of instinct' (p. 195), as 'indistinct, almost vague' (p. 168). In sum, he states that 'the filmgoer *feels* the film's thinking *directly*, *affectively*' (p. 161), for such thoughts are 'thought without reasoning' (p. 66). Frampton's filmosophy can thus be placed

2 Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (enlarged edition) (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 40.

alongside myriad postmodern attempts to deny the validity of conscious, reflective thoughts based on reason. Rather, for him, what films demonstrate are ways of thinking that are beyond reason, ways that are felt, direct and immediate.

McGowan too falls into line with postmodern conceptions of desubjectivized experience. 'The reduction of the subject to the nothingness of the objet petit a', he claims, 'is the most extreme form of freedom available to the subject' (p. 178). The way to achieve this kind of extreme freedom necessitates the negation of reasoned, critical reflection. Rather, 'A genuine psychoanalytic film theory', for McGowan, 'advocates fully immersing oneself in cinematic fascination and focusing on the points of rupture where the gaze emerges' (p. 15). What all of these conceptions amount to for both McGowan and Frampton is that our experiences of films are *singular*. They are emanations freed from traditional or rational structures of meaning, the most advanced of which are those that rupture shared conceptions of a social world – for McGowan they break down ideology or the symbolic; for Frampton they are 'personal', 'immediately affective' and negate the need to 'think or refer to ideas' (p. 93). What both authors ultimately rely on for a conception of cinematic experience is a fetishization of the individualized, personal experience, an experience that is devoid of a world, absented from any commitment to social belonging or any kind of political structure. McGowan's politics, for example, are reduced to fleeting moments of individual experiential enjoyment: 'The political value of the traumatic encounter with the real lies in [allowing] spectators to look at themselves – and the prevailing symbolic structure – from the perspective of a void. In this sense, the traumatic encounter represents the possibility of freedom, as it releases the spectator from all symbolic constraints' (p. 20). If this is a politics, then it is a politics of meaningless, anonymous instances of monadic bliss – and a long way from any kind of committed engagement to understanding the structure of social formations, let alone resisting or reforming such structures. Or to quote Hegel's criticism of Schelling, what McGowan gives us is a 'night in which all cows are black'.[3]

If Frampton's *Filmosophy* avoids politics, then that is no criticism. Indeed, in the final account, what impresses in his book is an unashamed love for cinema. It would be remiss of me to imply Frampton's book fails, for there is *something* there – an enthusiasm, a willing desire to grapple with this strange incarnation called cinema – that is immensely rewarding and stimulating. The spirit of the book is one which reminds me of the great soothsayers of modern painting – Apollinaire, Kandinsky, Kokoschka, Marinetti, Malevich and others – and it is little wonder that Frampton relies on many writers of the 1920s who pulsated with the future promise of cinema: Dulac, Epstein, Eisenstein, Balázs. There is indeed a future promise in *Filmosophy*: that the future of cinema is alive and well, and some of us are awaiting its thoughts with excited anticipation.

3 G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 9. Hegel adds that 'this is cognition naively reduced to vacuity'.

review

Hye Seung Chung, *Hollywood Asian: Philip Ahn and the Politics of Cross-Ethnic Performance*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2006, 232 pp.
Daisuke Miyao, *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007, 378 pp.

ALASTAIR PHILLIPS

These books on the Japanese silent film star Sessue Hayakawa and the Korean-American character actor Philip Ahn offer important new opportunities to develop our understanding of the transnational history of Hollywood cinema. From the vantage point of the particular systems of production, representation and reception concerning the deployment of East Asian actors within American narrative filmmaking, Daisuke Miyao and Hye Seung Chung have uncovered valuable insights into Hollywood's global strategies during a time of enormous political upheaval and cultural change regarding the construction of American self-identity and the USA's attitudes to its East Asian citizens and neighbours. Both write impressively from 'within' in order to stage their understanding of the ambivalent status these two actors possessed in relation to the twin processes of Americanization and modernization. Although some of their research findings vary – inevitably so considering the different ethnic origins of their case studies and the different commercial status these actors finally obtained – there are fascinating points of sympathetic alignment and intellectual convergence.

Although he made a number of American films for the New York Motion Picture Company, it was not until the enormous success of his role in Cecil B. DeMille's *The Cheat* (1915) for the Jesse L. Lasky Feature Play Company that Sessue Hayakawa really caught the American filmgoing public's attention. For a relatively brief time until he was both succeeded by the romantic exoticism of Rudolf Valentino and

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usurped by the shift in Hollywood fan discourse back towards the more idealized image of the white American male, Hayakawa was, as Daisuke Miyao suggests, like Charlie Chaplin in that he was 'one of first [Hollywood] stars whose international reputation form[ed] an essential part of his story' (p. 23). The Japanese actor was, for example, praised by the likes of Sergei Eisenstein in Russia and Louis Delluc in France. In the words of an advertisement placed by Paramount within the Hollywood trade press in 1917, 'Sessue Hayakawa has brought to the American motion picture the mysterious, the magic and mystic of Japan [sic]' (p. 6).

One of the core elements of Miyao's analysis regarding Lasky's subsequent promotion of Hayakawa was that the immediate ascendancy of his international profile uniquely coincided with broader patterns of economic transformation within the American film industry. He arrived at the point of a greater appeal to middle-class audiences and one of the key means of delivering this was the development of the star system with its emphasis on product differentiation being determined by the supposedly unique attributes and character types of individual charismatic personalities. Here Hayakawa's ethnicity was crucial, for what 'Lasky exploited most was Japan's [particular] movable middle-ground position in a racial and cultural hierarchy'. For American, and indeed other various international audiences, the image of Japan crucially lay somewhere between what Miyao terms 'the white and the nonwhite, between "uniformity" and "difference"'(p. 9). Hence, 'Hayakawa became a representative of the model minority . . . who attained success in a legitimate industry without threatening the current sociopolitical and economic system or the middle-class sense of values' (p. 12).

How, in particular, was this process enacted? Miyao argues that Hayakawa's early and rapid success within Hollywood cinema may be attributed to the calculated intersection of a number of interrelated factors. Firstly, there was the deliberate emphasis on the particularly 'American' aspects of Hayakawa's own persona and those of the individual characters he played. Secondly, in order for him to function within the narrative operations of his films, melodramatic strategies were devised which reinforced the 'motif of self-sacrifice for white women and white American families' (p. 15). Thirdly, it was advantageous that the political conditions of World War I favoured sympathies with Japan. But finally, and perhaps most interestingly, there was also an immensely important synergy between Hayakawa's embodiment of what Miyao terms 'Japanese Taste' and the particular aspects of his acting skills that were most commented upon by press and fans alike.

American society, going back to the latter part of the nineteenth century, had conventionally maintained an ambivalent attitude towards Japanese culture that simultaneously enhanced the purchase that Hayakawa had with his desired, core, middle-class female audience and limited the evolution of his screen persona. On the one hand, there was a

domesticated fascination with the aesthetic refinement and cultural artefacts of traditional Japan, which was, in turn, reproduced in fan magazine spreads showing Hayakawa himself 'at home' within the USA. On the other hand, as a visibly Japanese male, Hayakawa also embodied 'the middle-class fear of Japanese imperialist expansion and Japanese immigrants' in general (p. 14).

In terms of his acting qualities and the personas that he appeared to project, this tension was played out in a number of ways. One of the most significant aspects of Hayakawa's stardom was his distinctive ability as an actor, and it was therefore partly necessary to emphasize the naturalness of his *impersonation* of a character over and above a *personification* which demonstrated a perfect degree of parity between his own gestures, expressions and body movements and those of the person he appeared to be playing. Thus, although he was particularly praised for his 'Asian-like' restraint, there was also a visible degree of equivalence between his controlled expressions and the stylized poses associated with the *mie* pose in Japanese kabuki acting when it was expected from the 'physical movement of an actor that [it] should display outwardly his inner emotions in a somewhat exaggerated manner' (p. 198). This emphasis on the expressive pose was not unlike the earlier pictorial style of film acting that historians such as Roberta Pearson[1] and others have argued was in the process of being replaced by a performance style that instead deployed a greater degree of verisimilitude in terms of its range of gestures and movement. The way that Miyao comes to terms with this in his remarkably nuanced analysis is by arguing that, like his screen persona more generally, Hayakawa embodied a mobile middle-ground between Orientalized and Americanized modes of performance; his face, in particular, was like that of a mask. 'By the use of mask-like expressions (tightened mouth and unmoving eyes) and his controlled pauses (stilled gestures), Hayakawa was able to freeze an action in intense ambiguity and/or ambivalence. Therefore, in [his] acting, the moments of restraint – that is, repression of emotions or motivations – were also those of being exaggerated and vice versa' (p. 200).

From the point of view of his intended American audiences, this enactment allowed a publicity strategy which conveyed an alignment between the qualities of Hayakawa's status as a performer and his attributes as a non-American. It perfectly limited the eventual progression of his career. Not that we need see his professional life in such restricted terms. Miyao also allows us to see a more complex set of negotiations being staged within the distinctive transnational cultural force-field that Hayakawa occupied during his heyday within the Hollywood system. Building on W.E.B. Du Bois's conception of 'double-consciousness' regarding racialized self-perception through the eyes of others, he suggests that the Japanese actor necessarily conveyed a form of 'triple consciousness', in that 'As an American star, he had to think about adjusting his made-in-the-USA star image to Japanese spectators. As a Japanese actor, he needed to be conscious about his

1 Roberta Pearson, *Eloquent Gestures: Transformations of Performance Style in the Griffith Biography Films* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992).

image of 'otherness' for American audiences. And as himself, Hayakawa Kintaro, he was conscious of his [own] alter ego's stardom' (p. 157). It is the unique achievement of Miyao's book that we are able to visualize the vectors especially of this first aspect of Hayakawa's stardom for the first time. By examining the Japanese–American Japanese-language press and by also discussing the critical reception of Hayakawa's films within his home country, Miyao intensifies the complexion of his history in a substantial way.

In terms of the coverage of Hayakawa's career within the Japanese-language American press, Miyao uncovers a complex discourse which recognized the currents of Japanese nationalism, but also acknowledged the imperatives of social assimilation. In Japan, initial critical reception suggested that Hayakawa should be seen as a source of national shame for leaving his home country in the first place and that he was pandering to western stereotypes of the Japanese nation. But this response became more contradictory as Hayakawa's commercial success led to the establishment of his own production company. He became 'nationalistically praised as a representative of Japan, but, at the same time, he was regarded [both] positively and negatively as a foreign star, or an imported star from the United States' (pp. 241–2).

A central component of this evident ambivalence was the intersection between the development of Hayakawa's international screen career and the emergence of the *Jun'eigageki undo* – the film movement within Japan that sought to link the modernization of Japanese self-identity with strategies that could counteract the prowess of the American film industry with a more distinctively Japanese film culture. By drawing on the pioneering research of Joanne Bernardi in particular,[2] Miyao demonstrates that Hayakawa thus occupied a liminal position within these debates. On the one hand, his films could be seen to embody the appropriation of inaccurate and stereotypical views of traditional Japanese landscapes, customs and social roles by the USA, but on the other, his success within the international sphere, and especially the American market, also demonstrated a form of screen modernity that could be seen to have consequences for the directions that the Japanese film industry had to take if it was truly to compete with its international rival, Hollywood. As with all else, central to this were the set of cultural tensions held in play by Hayakawa's acting style. The coexistence of these gestural but restrained characteristics meant that for Japanese film critics such as Kondo Iyokichi, the Japanese emigre actor had the duty of vividly demonstrating the attributes of Japaneseness to overseas audiences, but that this 'must be based on a worldly common, cosmopolitan acting style' (p. 252).

It was not until 1945 in *China Sky* (Ray Enright) that Philip Ahn was able to play his first Korean role in American film and indeed, according to Hye Seung Chung, this was the first Korean character in the history of Hollywood. It is thus an underlying aspect of her study of Ahn's career that Chung emphasizes what she calls the 'cross-ethnic performativity'

2 Joanne Bernardi, *Writing in Light: the Silent Scenario and the Japanese Pure Film Movement* (Detroit, IL: Wayne State University Press, 2001).

(p. xvi) of his work, since the Korean–American actor was repeatedly called upon to play non-Korean roles such as Chinese characters in the cycle of Oriental detective films in the 1930s. Indeed, much in the same way that German and middle-European Jewish emigres were compelled to play Hollywood Nazis during World War II, Ahn also found an unlikely career playing Japanese villains during the same period in the full knowledge that his familial home country had in real life been violently colonized by the Japanese. In truth, as Chung suggests, 'Orientalist masquerade was a strategy that the [Asian] actor was compelled to employ from his very first job hunt in Hollywood' (p. 41).

In order to move beyond the model of the 'bad object', which is the Hollywood studio system, Chung deploys an active model of textual analysis and spectatorship which argues that, as an example of the Asian 'cross ethnic performer', Ahn occupied a particular status within Hollywood. Firstly, there was the necessarily complex masquerade that such acting roles demanded. Chung implicitly suggests that, in this area, albeit from a politically different cultural vantage point, there were potential similarities between Ahn's and Hayakawa's modes of acting. She shows, for example, that 'In his impersonation of Oriental characters, Ahn incorporated many visual components and tactics, such as make-up, blank expressions, and hyperbolic or flamboyant gestures' (p. 46). However, what actually made Ahn's performance style so distinctive, in the sense of being able to effect a masquerade, was its shift in emphasis from the visible to the audible. In other words, as a native speaker with perfect American English, Ahn was forced to put on 'a verbal act' (p. 46) in order to properly 'pass' as an Oriental 'other'.

Secondly, Ahn's distinctive form of 'cross-ethnic performativity' can be seen in terms of a particular triad of meaning. This has echoes of Miyao's conception of 'triple consciousness' regarding Hayakawa's personification as an international star, but it also has implications for the ways in which differentiated international audiences similarly understood prominent contemporaneous European emigre actors such as Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich performing varied national roles. Here, Chung argues that the knowing agent of the masquerade (a Korean–American actor passing as a non-Korean) appealed to a dual audience: one that may be termed 'dupes' (unaware of this fundamental conceit) and one – which especially concerns the author politically – that may be termed 'clairvoyant', in that bicultural Asian–Americans were immediately able to perceive the incongruity of the performance. In various B-films such as *Daughter of Shanghai* (Robert Florey, 1937) and *King of Chinatown* (Nick Grinde, 1939), when Ahn played alongside Anna May Wong, Asian–American audiences even had the pleasure of seeing the first romantic pairing of two active Asian leads in mainstream American film.

Chung's book goes on to trace the varied elements of Ahn's career. It examines the ways in which his 'impersonations', and the films of which they were part, related to the vicissitudes of American foreign policy in

the region. Her monitoring of Office of War Information records and analysis of Douglas Sirk's Korean War drama *Battle Hymn* (1957) generate numerous useful insights. When posing the obvious question of why so few actual Korean roles have been made available to Korean–American actors in Hollywood cinema, Chung suggests that, unlike the case of Hayakawa (who incidentally also played non-Japanese parts), Koreans have always been difficult to place within the genealogy of Asian–American society and screen representation. During World War II, for instance, they were classed as 'enemy aliens', and with the Korean War itself they became split between the 'racial enemy' and the 'neocolonized ally' (p. 187). For all this, and perhaps especially because of the prominent stardom of Hayakawa and the broader and thus more nuanced textual and historical analysis displayed within the critical framework of his study, Miyao's book remains an ultimately more wide-ranging read. Having said this, along with the spate of recent writing on Anna May Wong[3] and Gina Marchetti's work on more contemporary examples of transnational cinema within the sphere of the Chinese diaspora,[4] taken together these texts propose a vital contribution to the current reconceptualization of Hollywood cinema within the framework of modern international film studies.

3 Such as Anthony B. Chan, *The Many Lives of Anna May Wong (1905-1961)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2003) and Karen J. Leong, *The China Mystique. Pearl S. Buck, Anna May Wong, Mayling Soong, and the Transformation of American Orientalism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005).

4 Gina Marchetti, *Romance and the "Yellow Peril": Race, Sex and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993).

review

Andrea Sabbadini (ed.), *Projected Shadows: Psychoanalytic Reflections on the Representation of Loss in European Cinema*. New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2007, 190 pp.

EMMA WILSON

At the start of his arresting chapter on *Un Chien Andalou*, Andrew Webber writes at some length about the properties of lace as *viewing material* (his italics):

> Lace occupies a special sort of space between: between innocence and guile, sacred and profane, the infantile and the adult only, inside and out. Whether on bodies or buildings, it is a cover for intimacy. (p. 93)

Lace is seen to stand for the 'scopophilic seductions of interiors and their fabrics' (p. 93); it is a material of disavowal that at once covers, and indicates, objects which combine desire and trauma. Intimacy and fragility, the very qualities that lace holds and hides, are aptly evoked in this volume which, at its best, demonstrates the peculiar capacity of cinema as art form to evoke the material complexity and intricacy of psychic life. *Projected Shadows* collects together an illuminating series of papers from the Third European Psychoanalytic Film Festival, which took place in London in November 2005. As Andrea Sabbadini suggests in his introduction, there has been much discussion already of the relationship between cinema and psychoanalysis. The aim of the volume is to deepen 'this ongoing, constructive dialogue between these two disciplines' (p. 1). This aim is reflected in the almost even spread of areas of expertise between the contributors; unlike many volumes of psychoanalytic film criticism, this volume draws in the voices of a good number of psychiatrists, psychoanalysts and clinical psychologists, as well as those of some of the finest film critics in and beyond the field of psychoanalytic criticism (T. Jefferson Kline, Andrew Webber, Catherine

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Portuges, Laura Mulvey and Ian Christie, among others). This range of perspectives brings with it a wealth of reflections on what it means to bring cinema and psychoanalysis together. At times those reflections are openly pragmatic. In an essay on Matteo Garone's *First Love* (2004), a film which considers anorexia, Maria Vittoria Costantini and Paola Golinelli explain that psychoanalysis allows them to raise unexplored or repressed areas of the psyche and emotions to consciousness. They go on to ask: 'What can it give us when we watch a film?' (p. 46). Their assumption of their own acuity is somewhat unexpected – 'Compared to the average film viewer, the analyst is more aware and more accustomed to reflecting on his emotions' (p. 46) – but their conclusion is heartening and frank. They write: 'Cinema, and more generally art, can provide psychoanalysts with extra tools for dealing with uncertainty and stress when, in the course of their daily practice, they may feel overwhelmed by confusion' (p. 54). This turn to film as complex narrative which may yield precious matter is also found in Petro Roberto Goisis's beautiful essay on Alina Marazzi's film about the memory of her mother, *For One More Hour with You* (2002). Goisis writes of his first encounter with the film in a session with one of his patients:

> Psychoanalysts know how their patients often become a source of inspiration or a stimulus for reading, films, songs, concerts, shows, holidays or other things. In such a context my reaction did not seem strange or peculiar; what I did not expect was that . . . I would enter into an emotional dimension that still accompanies me. (p. 24)

Although relatively unusual in film criticism, the evocations of emotion in viewing offer some of the most tantalizing, and pleasurable, moments of the volume.

As might be expected, the essays gathered here are of a varying tempo and different levels of scholarly engagement. Amongst the fastest paced, Alexander Stein's virtuoso reading of *Belleville Rendez-vous* (Sylvain Chomet, 2003) interestingly makes kineticism itself its subject. T. Jefferson Kline's discussion of Anne Fontaine's compelling *Comment j'ai tué mon père* (2001) offers a breathtaking analysis. Examining the film's retrospective narrative, Kline argues that in our reevaluation of the material, as we become gradually aware that what has been seen as real is actually fantasy,

> We find ourselves exactly replicating the work of at least three other important states: that of the mourner confronting his loss, that of the dreamer confronting the manifest content of his dream, and that of the analyst faced with material produced by the analysand. (p. 9)

Kline moves deftly through discussion of Freud, Abraham and Torok on mourning, looking at the connections between film and mourning as psychological events requiring reevaluation. Laura Mulvey, in a similarly complex essay on Vincent Monnikendam's *Mother Dao, the Turtle-like* (1995), offers an intriguing revision of relations between

cinema, history and psychoanalysis. Her recourse to Freud on *Nachträglichkeit*, to explore the reinterpretation of the past according to the present in the compilation film, is masterly. She offers a vision of 'the vast accumulation of film footage, that mirrors the twentieth century like a parallel universe' (p. 109) and proceeds to explore the way that the reality of the past, of the images caught in this footage, may yet be rewritten in the future. The verve and gleam of Kline or Mulvey may not be matched in all chapters, but there are treasures too in some of the more associative papers, in those discussions which are less assertive in their moves into theory. What emerges from the volume as a whole is a series of different and differing encounters between cinema and psychoanalysis, and also a vision of a new corpus of films which explore the representation of loss, a grouping of films such as *Cries and Whispers* (Ingmar Bergman, 1973), *Hable con ella* (Pedro Almodóvar, 2002) and *Under the Sand* (François Ozon, 2000), with others that treat equally harrowing and heartfelt material but which will have been far less frequently viewed. Indeed, what draws these various films together is their astonishing ability to make visible, beneath the veils and lace of narrative, intangible, elusive and emotionally charged experience.

Perpetuating the concern with retrospection and revision through the volume, Ian Christie's ingenious essay, 'Time regained', makes a perfect coda, reviewing such recent films as *Hidden* (Michael Haneke, 2005) and *5x2* (François Ozon, 2004) through a backwards glance at reverse motion. From start to close, Andrea Sabbadini presents here a sensitive and well-judged volume which offers welcome attention to the forms of mourning and loss represented in film.

Yingchi Chu, *Chinese Documentaries: from Dogma to Polyphony* (Routledge Media, Culture and Social Change in Asia Series). London: Routledge, 2007, 255 pp.
Gary G. Xu, *Sinascape: Contemporary Chinese Cinema*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007, 175 pp.

YINGJIN ZHANG

review

These two books demonstrate that English scholarship of Chinese cinema has grown considerably since the late 1980s. While Yinchi Chu's book attempts to fill a gap by bringing the history of Chinese documentaries to western academic attention and foregrounding the interconnectedness of film and television industries in contemporary China, Gary Xu's book, by focusing on individual directors and select films, aims at an in-depth exploration of the production and circulation of Chinese images in the age of globalization. The two scholars share a conviction that the political economy of the global market has made a deep impact on Chinese media industries, but they have adopted markedly different approaches: Chu proceeds with caution and relies on a description of historical development and a summary of existing scholarship, whereas Xu favours theoretical reflections and critiques both cultural and academic productions.

Chu prefers the phrase 'documentary cinema' to 'documentary film' in *Chinese Documentaries* because 'cinema includes film policy, production, film text, distribution, film culture and film criticism, all of which have been profoundly affected by the political events during that period' (p. 3). Discussion of politics and policy, therefore, is predominant in Chu's study, which charts 'an evolutionary trajectory' of Chinese documentaries from dogma to polyphony (p. 5). The dogma in question, however, does not come from a single source; rather, 'twenty years before the Communist revolution, traditional Confucian morality exerted

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a powerful influence on the conception of the documentary genre' (p. 215) – a claim Chu tries to sustain by tracing the instrumentalist view of documentary shared by commercial producers, the Communists and the Nationalists (*Guomingdang*) in the Republican period (1920s–1940s). To provide a historical background, Chu devotes Chapter 2 to nationalism and the growth of Chinese documentary before 1949, Chapter 3 to the era of dogma where visual propaganda prevailed in socialist China, and Chapter 4 to media reforms after 1993, as illustrated by the CETV (China Education Television) and its programming aimed at cultivating new citizens. The remaining chapters are more topic-oriented than historical: Chapter 5 addresses television programmes related to legal issues, Chapter 6 is on representations of ethnic minorities, and Chapter 7 on polyphonic voices partially represented by independent documentary. The book ends with a Conclusion, in which Chu takes up the subject of 'documentaries as critical discourse' by reiterating her thesis from dogma to polyphony.

To my knowledge, Chu's work is the first book-length study of Chinese documentary in English; as such, the author faces a daunting task of meeting disparate academic expectations. The volume of visual material is enormous, although recent Chinese publications on the history of Chinese documentaries and on the interviews with major practioners have greatly facilitated Chu's research.[1] Her safe choice of a synthetic approach enables her to review both western theorization and Chinese discussion of documentaries, and her succinct precis of debates about truth versus fiction and Bill Nichols's seven documentary modes launches the book in a promising way. Nonetheless, the ensuing three chapters of historical and thematic overviews have prevented her from engaging with the critical issues brought up in Chapter 1, and often she appears too ready to endorse the government's media reforms.[2] In Chapter 4, for instance, she locates the positive impact of television ratings and argues that 'we can speak of an advance in democratization by increased media participation', which in the CETV case 'suggests the gradual emergence of a style of social interaction congenial to the formation of a genuine public media sphere', and which ultimately serves as '*a televisual rehearsal of democracy by means other than the obviously political*' (pp. 114–15, italics in original). What is problematic here is not just the nature of such 'democracy' but also the question of who benefits from it or its rehearsal – advertisers, sponsors, policymakers, television producers and/or audiences of specific kinds.

Chu may be commended for placing Chinese television documentaries on the map, but her methodology is such that the necessary distinctions between various television programmes (for example, educational, documentary) as well as those between television and film (including DV) documentaries rarely undergo scrutiny. In fact, even Chinese television producers are intentionally vague on the question of whether many of their programmes (typically, footage of reality plus expert commentary) are really documentaries. Moreover, radical differences

1 See Fang Fang, *Zhongguo jilupian fazhan shi/History of the Development of Chinese Documentary Cinema* (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2003), Shan Wanli, *Zhongguo jilu dianying shi/History of Chinese Documentary Film* (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 2005).

2 In terms of endorsing the government's reform measures, Yingchi Chu's book shares much with Ying Zhu, *Chinese Cinema During the Era of Reform: the Ingenuity of the System* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003).

between television documentaries (many of them in serial form on a grand theme) and independent or semi-independent documentaries (concentrating on the plight of ordinary people) are largely lost in Chu's study, which prefers parallel presentations of information to critical dialogue. In Chapter 7, therefore, the reader does not feel the excitement associated with independent documentary in China and abroad; instead, independent documentarists' challenge to official film culture is reduced to one of 'the many voices' catalogued under prosaic headings such as 'rural topics' and 'urban environment'. It is a pity that Chu's book was published almost at the same time as two English collections on contemporary Chinese cinema and that she did not have the chance to engage critical interpretations of Chinese independent documentary, such as those by Chris Berry.[3]

In contrast to Chu's disinterested presentation of Chinese documentaries, Gary Xu's *Sinascape* is full of exuberance. Xu begins with the western media hype over the twenty-first century as 'China's century' and exposes a globalized cinematic mode of production of images of China that, in his view, will make 'China's century' equal to 'Hollywood's century' (p. 4). Xu defines 'Sinascape' as simultaneously the network called 'Chinese cinema' (including productions from mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and the Chinese diaspora), the filmic representation of China, and an integral part of the global mediascape (p. 17). This definition of Sinascape as a series of multilayered, media-based 'contact zones' enables Xu to explore a wide range of cultural and theoretical issues.

Chapter 1 of *Sinascape* situates Zhang Yimou's blockbuster films *Hero* (2002) and *House of Flying Daggers* (2004) in the context of domestic anti-piracy measures and a global contention over intellectual copyright, and it examines Zhang's move from ideascape (*yijing*) to Sinascape in his controversial construction of a 'genuine' Chinese culture. Chapter 2 focuses on the representation of trauma and violence – as foregrounded in a surrealist decapitation scene – in Jiang Wen's black-and-white film *Devils on the Doorstep* (2000), and it evaluates Jiang's subversion of official historiography by way of parody and the subtle implications of the warm reception for this film in Japan while it remains banned in China. Chapter 3 analyzes the sixth generation's preferred depiction of urban underdogs – the floating population of rural workers in the city – and highlights the tension between cinematic realism ('my camera doesn't lie') and the narrator's confession 'I am lying' in Lou Ye's *Suzhou River* (2000). Chapter 4 proceeds from Hong Kong director Stephen Chow's *Kung Fu Hustle* (2004) and links the physical sites of Shaw Brothers' theatres in Southeast Asia to the symbolic sites of urban demolition in Taiwan auteur Tsai Ming-liang's *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* (2003). Chapter 5 uses Hou Hsiao-hsien's *Millennium Mambo* (2001) to investigate the intriguing relationship between episodic memory and generic knowledge and to explore the individual's dilemma in confronting the spontaneity, contingency and

3 The two collections are Paul G. Pickowicz and Yingjin Zhang (eds), *From Underground to Independent: Alternative Film Culture in Contemporary China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), and Zhang Zhen (ed.), *The Urban Generation: Chinese Cinema and Society at the Turn of the Twenty-first Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

melancholy of postmodern Taipei. Chapter 6 discusses the technique of double sequencing in Hong Kong director Fruit Chan's low-budget films and suggests that, paradoxically, transnational cinema is destructive of human relations yet potentially liberating. The book concludes with a postscript in which Xu examines Hollywood's recent successful remakes of East Asian hit movies and East Asian directors' options regarding Hollywood's transnational strategy of outsourcing.

The brief summary above does not capture the richness of *Sinascape*, which enhances our understanding of contemporary Chinese cinema not so much by broaching new topics (such as copyright and piracy) as by compelling us to think beyond the familiar. Unlike Chu in *Chinese Documentaries*, Xu is willing to engage critical views throughout *Sinascape*. He questions Appadurai's concept of mediascape as being 'postnational and deterritorialized' (p. 18); he joins Chinese scholars' interrogation of the *suzhi* (quality) discourse used in the Chinese media to sanction the emerging middle-class value system (pp. 68–9); he weighs in on the relevance of Benjamin's distinction between symbol and allegory in Chinese cultural studies (pp. 81–2); and he draws on Deleuze's theory of space-image and time-image to elucidate Hou Hsiao-hsien's mediation of memory and nostalgia in Taiwan (pp. 113–14).

Xu's willingness to engage theoretically makes *Sinascape* a stimulating book, but this does not mean that his arguments are always persuasive. From time to time, there appears to be a discrepancy, or at least a distance, between Xu's exuberant theorization and a particular text or issue he is addressing. In addition, Xu does not follow through with his stated purpose of investigating issues of 'copyright, digital encryption, and ownership of virtual space' (p. 3). Except for the introduction, these issues do not constitute the primary objects of his study, so readers are advised to look elsewhere for recent treatments of copyright, piracy and related issues in transnational Chinese media.[4]

The two books reviewed here reveal a measure of self-reflexivity in Chinese film studies. Xu invites his readers to share with him a sense of 'situatedness' which, to quote Michael Peter Smith, 'concretely connects macro-economic and geopolitical transformations to the micros-networks of social action that people create, move in, and act upon in their daily lives' (p. 18). Chu likewise seeks to achieve the same kind of macro and micro connections in *Chinese Documentaries*, but her awareness of 'the fate of a cultural broker', such as she herself, leads her to make this apology: 'some of my Chinese readers will find the book overly critical, just as many of my Western readers will find its critique too mild' (p. 9). Situated in Australia and published in English, Chu need not worry too much about her book being overtly critical of the Chinese media. As long as one recognizes one's own particular situatedness in knowledge production, there is nothing to be gained from trying to please everyone. Scholarship advances not through skilled diplomacy but through earnest engagement with critical issues.

4 See Shujen Wang, *Framing Piracy: Globalization and Film Distribution in Greater China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), Laikwan Pang, *Cultural Control and Globalization in Asia: Copyright, Piracy, and Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2006).

Chu's *Chinese Documentaries* offers a timely, accessible introduction to Chinese documentaries. With its preference for industry information over textual analysis, it may appeal to people interested more in media and communication studies than film and cultural studies. Xu's *Sinascape*, on the other hand, is an attractive book for any one seeking fresh, imaginative interpretations of the complicated, sometimes contradictory, roles Chinese cinema plays in the global politics of transnational cultural production, circulation and reception in the early twenty-first century.

review

Melanie Wright, *Religion and Film*. London: IB Tauris, 2007, 244 pp.
Eric S. Christianson, Peter Francis and William R. Telford (eds), *Cinéma Divinité*. London: SCM, 2005, 373 pp.

GAYE W. ORTIZ

Although perhaps a new notion to some *Screen* readers, the connection between religion and film goes back many years. Besides being the source of much salacious content in silent films (consider the early exotic dancer Salomé) the Bible had many well-known stories that could have seemed to early filmmakers to have natural cinematic potential: for instance, the dramatic confrontation of David and Goliath, the parting of the Red Sea, the epic battle of Jericho. The relationship between the church and cinema has been a rocky one, especially during the Catholic Legion of Decency's reign of terror in the USA, which at one point in the mid twentieth century demanded that American Catholics pledge annually to avoid movies that did not reflect Church values or morals.

More recently, theology and religious studies scholars have been interested in establishing a more positive dialogue between those disciplines and cinema. The two books being reviewed here are representative of how much that dialogue has matured and broadened in the twenty-first century, ironically at a time in western culture that has seen a rise in extremist religious practices and fundamentalist mentalities that shun popular culture.

The predominantly Christian academic viewpoint found in the book by Christianson et al. posits an appreciation of the film medium as both a tool for dialogue with culture and as a pedagogical aid. The interdisciplinary approach of this book is useful in building relationships between religion, theology, the Bible and film through writings mostly from British scholars, whose shared interest in cinema – realized through

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an annual conference on religion and film at St Deiniol's Library in Wales – has resulted in this wide-ranging collaborative work.

Wright's book, *Religion and Film*, is subtitled 'An Introduction', but in many ways is much more ambitious than the Christianson volume. It attempts to provide a 'holistic' approach throughout that brings religious studies, cultural studies and film studies to bear upon 'the interrelationship of religion and cinema' (cover quote). As an introductory text its methodology is clearly set out, with following chapters dedicated to analyses of six films. These vary widely in age and genre, chosen to illustrate not only their significant religious narrative and visual content but also to explore the role of the audience in constructing the meaning of these films as 'religious'.

What these two books have in common is Melanie Wright; she contributes to the Christianson text a robust chapter on Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (1928) that is more or less replicated in her own book. Both books exemplify the wide-open attitude of religion, theology and film scholars today who seek and find value in the conversation between religion and culture. Both books begin by offering a definition of cinema that connotes a wider focus than the term 'film' because it also involves the commercial context of film producers and consumers. Theological analysis of film that ignores the aspect of film as entertainment, and – usually from a devotional standpoint – only ponders its deep significance in religious terms, is superseded in both these books by a more sophisticated understanding of the many levels at which religion and film connect. Wright identifies a '*modus vivendi* of academic work in religion, theology and film, its motivations and limitations' (p. 11) and applauds scholars who affirm the integrity of the medium of film as an equal partner in the conversation with theology and religion. But whereas Christianson et al. are primarily concerned with Christian and Jewish theology and religion, Wright intentionally looks at world cinema and representations of world religions, including Islam and Paganism.

Wright's analyses of films include the 2001 Hindi film *Lagaan*, which she describes as a crosssover in genre: a romantic historical melodrama/musical. Her interest in this film's relationship to Bollywood in both stylistic form and production practices is bolstered by its deep connection to Hindi mythology, specifically through the intertextual play between the film and ancient texts such as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Wright provides a glimpse into how the balance between ancient and contemporary 'Indian-ness' is key to Indian cultural identity through her perceptive discussion of these narratives' epic heroes, who are analogous to the nationalistic hero of *Lagaan* (set in British colonial India).

This knack of introducing multiple considerations of the cinematic experience is also displayed in Wright's chapter on Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments* (1923). She resists the use of easy labels for the film such as 'biblical epic' and 'religious spectacular', and refutes the assumption that, as the product of an auteur and devoted Christian, the film could ever have been 'completely the product and possession of its

director' (p. 60). The difficulty of locating the screenplay of *The Ten Commandments* entirely within the Old Testament is also a topic of contention: some of the film's narrative elements are identified by Wright as being loosely derived from the Bible, but she argues convincingly that most of the Hebrew context of the story is actually 'subsumed' within a Christian framework. The reception of DeMille's creation – what does it mean to audiences in terms of being a 'religious' film? – is another complex issue tackled in this chapter. Wright observes that the commentators and critics who were scathing upon its release in 1956 objected to its visual excess: 'By attempting to capture the events of divine history on screen, Hollywood created petty gods or idols, a process antithetical to the fostering of true religious sentiment' (p. 75). Wright suggests, rather, that a film's religious meanings shift with the cultural perceptions of and after its time. *The Ten Commandments*' rerelease in 1989 was notable because of the change in cinematic technology since its original release: then, epics were 'overwhelming' on the cinema screen, but their impact is now restricted in an age where films are viewed in 'diminished versions' on television screens.

The highlight of this book for me is the chapter on Robin Hardy's 1973 cult film *The Wicker Man*. According to Wright, the unfortunate history of the film's distribution, along with the differing versions produced, are key elements affecting the film's reception by consumers over the decades. The film's religious theme – the battle between Christianity and paganism – is intertwined with its connection to the horror genre. The film's lack of 'narrative closure' is also attractive to its fans, and Wright quotes a commentator who suggests that, 'in the light of the polarized religious climate that exists around the world, a fresh viewing of . . . *The Wicker Man* takes [on] an added resonance' (p. 101). The fan base attached to this film might be reflected by the number of websites devoted to it, but Wright disputes the accuracy of designations like 'cult' and 'religious' to describe the film's enduring appeal. When reading about the film industry, we need more of this type of academic research that recognizes the complexity of relations between consumers and media products without resorting to stereotypes and generalizations when branding trends in popular culture.

What the Christianson text lacks in a sustained development of theoretical analysis, it makes up for in sheer variety. It would be expected that a collection of this kind would contain essays on famous filmmakers beloved of religious studies scholars, such as Buñuel and Eastwood; Eastwood in fact has two chapters related to his work, including one boasting the book's most entertaining title (from Christianson): 'A Fistful of Shekels: Ehud the Judge (Judges 3.12-30) and the Spaghetti Western' (pp. 199–213). A range of genres, from cyberpunk, animation and film noir, ensures that the reader is exposed to the full potential of the application of theological and religious studies to the filmic text and, in particular, to films that the ordinary filmgoer would not readily identify as containing religious material. Jeff Keuss's chapter on Stanley Kubrick,

whose *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) has been the subject of numerous theological, mythological and religious treatments (Neil Hurley, James Wall, John Izod) since the 1960s, assesses Kubrick's agnostic yet passionate interest in religion as detected through his filmmaking. In Part IV, the American Church's 'Radical Reformation' of the nineteenth century is brought to bear upon *The Apostle* (Robert Duvall, 1997) and *O Brother, Where Art Thou* (Joel and Ethan Coen, 2000). Readers may be fascinated with the way in which the background to the films' evangelist characters is fleshed out by Keuss to give greater depth to the stereotypical Southern redneck preacher.

Not to be ignored is the considerable and well-deserved exposure this book gives to William R. Telford, whose four chapters demonstrate his mastery of biblical film scholarship. From the first Passover to the Last Supper, Telford effortlessly and meticulously details not only the biblical context but also the cinematic representation of religious rituals and identity throughout film history.

Considering the contribution of these two books within the fast-increasing corpus of texts on theology and religion and film, the first thing to mention is the distinctive role that British scholarship has played for well over a decade in the development of this field of interest. Although clearly written by academics for students and scholars in religious studies and theology, anyone engaged in research in film studies and cultural studies will find these texts worthy of their time. They offer a non-dogmatic array of engaged, enthusiastic and media-savvy scholarship from authors who display no desire to claim cinema for their own religious agenda but are, rather, driven by a genuine appreciation and understanding of film.

review

Annette Hill, *Restyling Factual TV: Audiences and News, Documentary and Reality Genres*. London: Routledge, 2007, 263 pp.

SU HOLMES

Annette Hill's *Restyling Factual TV* will be an influential book both in the sphere of television studies and beyond. It engages with the contemporary 'restyling' of factual television – a process which has seen hybridity emerge as the 'distinctive feature of factuality' (p. 212). As Hill explains:

> *Restyling Factual Television* is about understanding genres in relation to each other and in relation to popular audiences. It takes as a starting point the idea that factual television is being restyled, that various kinds of news, current affairs, documentary and popular factual genres are part of a turbulent time in broadcasting. . . . Popular factual genres are not self-contained, stable and knowable, they migrate, mutate and replicate. Significantly, they cross over into existing factual genres, with the cross-pollination of styles increasing the pace of change in news, current affairs or documentary (p. 2).

The book works from the entirely reasonable (but rarely explored) premiss that the reception of television genres is relational. Audiences do not experience any genre in isolation, and reception processes operate on an intrageneric and intertextual level. Hill demonstrates this with respect to the wider category of factual TV (which she acknowledges is certainly a moving target), and through a focus on news, documentary and 'popular factual' programming (reality TV).

As Hill explains, the impetus for the book emerged from the findings of her earlier study *Reality TV: Audiences and Popular Factual Television*.[1] This indicated the extent to which viewers used a 'fact/fiction continuum to evaluate the various programmes that were part of a wide ranging mix of popular factual output' (p. 21), planting 'the seed'

1 Annette Hill, *Reality TV: Audiences and Popular Factual Television* (London: Routledge, 2005).

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for a wider generic study of this process. The new book also has aspects of a cross-national focus in so far as research was undertaken in Sweden. Although secondary to the overriding comparison of different factual genres, this is used to highlight how production contexts, as well as cultural values, shape variations in audience response to factual genres.

The book draws upon both qualitative and quantitative evidence, and its key research questions probe how adult viewers are negotiating the changing generic environment for factual programming, how they evaluate its truth claims, what they learn from factual television, and what attitudes they display towards the treatment of participants (p. 213). The research questions are also reflected in the chapter titles. After two contextualizing chapters ('Restyling factuality' and 'Mapping factual TV'), Hill moves through topics such as 'Public and popular', 'Genre work', 'Truth claims', 'Knowledge and learning' and 'Participation' (in terms of viewers' assessment of the people who appear). 'Containing factuality' then offers a thorough and accessible summary of the themes and findings explored in the book.

What emerges from this research is a valuable insight into how viewers are navigating their way through what Hill describes as 'a busy, noisy and constantly changing factual television environment' (p. 29). Of particular interest is the conceptual categorization of audience responses. Hill refers to 'idealists' (who see factual programming as truthful and informative), 'traditionalists' (who yoke factual TV to traditional public service content), 'reality refuseniks' (who block out reality TV from their conception of factual television), and 'contemporaries' (who define factual TV across programme categories, but who critically evaluate their differences). Hill identifies the latter two categories as having the most important and overriding distinctions, largely because reality TV plays such an important role in shaping viewers' evaluations of contemporary factual programming (see below).

But there are discourses of cultural value at work in this book which are never fully examined – discourses which shape the audience responses, as well as the thesis of the book itself. To put it bluntly, reality TV gets quite a bashing in *Restyling Factuality*, both in the empirical evidence presented and in the writing-up of the research. Given the often negative media discourse which has surrounded reality TV, it is not so surprising that it is positioned at the bottom of the generic hierarchy where viewer perceptions of truth claims, knowledge and learning, or questions of ethics are concerned. But the rejection of reality TV is so relentless that, if based on the audience sample explored in the book, it begs the question as to how reality TV has achieved such cultural popularity (and *why* it has). As Hill notes, her earlier book on audiences and reality TV demonstrated how viewers were aware of the social stigma of watching 'trash TV', and she acknowledges that this shapes their willingness to discuss reality TV in anything other than critical terms. In fact, although distinguishing between 'reality refusniks' and 'contemporary viewers' (the latter of which *do* include reality TV within

the factual programming category), Hill notes at one point that there appears to be a disparity between viewers' professed evaluations and their actual viewing habits:

> Perhaps one of the most interesting points to emerge from the research is that despite the social importance of traditional factual genres, they are not necessarily watched by viewers. Popular factual genres are not regarded as socially important, but they are watched by large numbers of viewers. . . . [This indicates that] . . . something is amiss in the viewing preferences for factuality. (p. 82)

Given that reality TV is perpetually cast in negative terms, this would seem to be more than just 'interesting', and the mediated nature of the audience responses would have benefited from more discussion. This is in part because they are operating within wider systems of power: younger viewers, but also female viewers, for example, were more likely to watch reality gameshows, and the public/popular binary which emerges in the study reifies long-standing associations between cultural value, public/ private, and gender and genre. As a whole, reality TV emerges in this book as a 'disruptive' presence in terms of audience perceptions of tele-factuality – a 'feral genre' which is 'bloated', 'extreme', 'wildly opportunistic' and 'deterritorial'. One of the effects of this is that it is the 'popular factual' which carries the brunt of *change* (restyling) as a programming category. Although shifts in television news (such as debates about tabloidization) are certainly discussed, a greater focus on change in news and documentary could have offered a different picture, while also sharpening the sense of what 'restyling' actually involves. The questions used in the audience research are also set up to investigate what can loosely be framed as the 'public' aspects of factual television. This is despite the fact that there has been debate from the start of academic writing on this subject about whether reality TV demands different methodological or theoretical tools than its factual predecessors. (This need not be read as an evacuation of its 'public' possibilities: it would have been interesting – if the timing had been different – to see how Hill's viewers responded to the UK *Celebrity Big Brother* 'race' row in 2007.)

There is of course no reason at all why *Restyling Factuality* should not be critical of reality TV, and Hill demonstrates how viewers do not hold back when judging its possibilities. But this is certainly not a book about the popular pleasures of such programming. (I am happy to declare that I speak here as someone who likes to watch, teach and research reality TV.) In fact, while the cross-generic focus of the book represents a crucial and illuminating intervention in both television audience studies and work on factual programming, it may also attest to the *difficulties* involved in moving across generic boundaries: do different types of programmes demand different questions, methods and 'tools'?

However, this is not to overshadow the significance of this work. As Hill notes, *Restyling Factual TV* is only 'one of several stories to tell

about factual reception practices' (p. 215), and she nods towards future research into how audiences consume television factuality across other media platforms (mobile phone or internet). But *Restyling Factual TV is* an important story insofar as the reception of factual television is concerned. If, as Hill observes, the time is right for more cross-genre research, then *Restyling Factual TV* will no doubt stand as an illuminating template for the complexities, challenges and rewards this will involve.

review

Helen Wheatley, *Gothic Television*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006, 244 pp.

DAVID BUTLER

Purists of gothic literature may find it difficult to accept the notion that the residents of the Castle of Otranto and 1313 Mockingbird Lane have much in common. But, as Helen Wheatley argues convincingly in her fine study of the small-screen gothic, the line connecting Prince Manfred's aristocratic family in Horace Walpole's founding gothic novel from 1765 to Lily and Herman Munster's monstrous (albeit good-natured) working-class family in the US sitcom *The Munsters* (1964–66) is not as tenuous as it might first appear.

Gothic Television is a welcome addition to the growing number of texts addressing non-mimetic genre programmes and also goes some way to rectifying the relative imbalance in studies of telefantasy (the catch-all term for small-screen fantasy, horror and science fiction). If film studies has tended to squeeze out fantasy in favour of horror and science fiction, the same is not true of television studies, where (with the exception of the surge in 'Buffy Studies') academic texts on aspects of telefantasy have, hitherto, emphasized science fiction and more fantasy-oriented shows. Although Wheatley notes, in the book's Conclusion, that she is not making any claims for the quality of her case-studies as pieces of television, *Gothic Television* succeeds in establishing the gothic genre (for Wheatley, it is a genre rather than a mode) as a frequent source of creativity, imagination and even subversion when it has been employed by programme-makers.

Wheatley focuses on UK and US television, providing good historical contextualization, especially with her excellent account in Chapter 1 of the concerns surrounding the portrayal of supernatural and horror elements in early British television. This chapter benefits from some

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revealing material found in the BBC Written Archives Centre, whereas the chapters on US television (perhaps understandably given the availability of relevant sources and the fact that *Gothic Television* is an adaptation of Wheatley's doctoral thesis) do not have quite the same depth of archival detail, creating a slight imbalance in the feel of the respective case studies. The earlier UK studies are full of fascinating archival data, including audience feedback research, internal memos and newspaper reviews, all of which helps to create a rich and varied picture of these programmes and their subsequent reception. As Wheatley reveals, key to the less explicit tone of early British gothic television, at the BBC at least, was a 'basic policy of ultimate good taste' (p. 32), a comment made by Basil Nicholls in a 1950 note on the challenge of adapting moments of horror in classic literature such as *King Lear*. By the late 1950s, the gothic anthology series was 'beginning to be viewed as a viable weapon in the duopolistic war for ratings' (p. 35) between the BBC and ITV. Wheatley demonstrates how *Mystery and Imagination* (1966–70) can be seen as a response by ITV to the 1962 Pilkington Report and its critique of commercial television, due in part to the programme's ability to unite the perceived needs of Reithian notions of 'quality', via the 'cultural cache of adapting a number of literary gothic "classics""(p. 37), with the populism of the horror genre. The book is at its finest when this historical material is combined with Wheatley's strong and frequently insightful formal analysis. Wheatley is sensitive to mise-en-scene, editing, camera movement and, crucially, the vital role of sound and music in establishing a strong sense of the gothic, and applies this impressive audiovisual awareness to extended studies of *Mystery and Imagination*, 'Whistle and I'll Come to You' (1968), 'Lost Hearts' (1973), *The Woman in White* (1997), *Twin Peaks* (1990–91), and *Millenium* (1996–99), among others.

Wheatley's choice of case-studies is notable. Seminal and expected programmes are given due attention (the 1970s run of *Ghost Story for Christmas* [1971–78] overseen by Lawrence Gordon Clark for example) but the inclusion and (perhaps unexpectedly lengthy) analysis of *The Addams Family* (1964–66) and *The Munsters* is what helps to make *Gothic Television* a more original and rewarding study than a straightforward overview of more 'typical' gothic texts. This chapter provides Wheatley's central thesis with its sternest test. Humour and a gothic sensibility are far from being mutually exclusive – a wicked and macabre wit runs throughout the work of gothic writers like Patrick McGrath – but the broad humour (more so in *The Munsters* than *The Addams Family*) and presence of a laughter track might seem to exclude these programmes from a genre that, in its literary form, Wheatley summarizes has been defined as displaying suspense, horror, disgust and, quoting Larry Gross, a 'literature where fear is the motivating and sustaining emotion' (p. 2). Where is the fear in *The Munsters*?

Wheatley is quite right, however, to embrace these supernatural sitcoms (part of what David Marc refers to as the 'magicom' tradition

popular in the USA during the 1960s[1]). As she observes, the blurring of generic boundaries is perfectly in keeping with the uncanny nature of the gothic (introducing the unfamiliar into the familiar) and the sitcom also typifies her core argument that television is particularly suited to the gothic through the two's shared emphasis on a domestic setting. This chapter, on US gothic television in the 1960s, concludes with a study of the gothic soap opera *Dark Shadows* (1966–71), and Wheatley provides a convincing argument as to these programmes' potential, through their twisting of familiar forms, for a subversive commentary on middle-class American lifestyle. The fear that is such an expected feature of gothic fiction *is* present, Wheatley argues, through their exposure of 'the instability of the family and the construction of normative gender identities' (p. 127), with both Lily and Morticia blurring the traditional boundary between the nurturing mother and the sexualized vamp. Wheatley makes use of the term 'worrying at' as an appropriate descriptor for the ways in which these programmes express an anxiety over US society, 'worrying' being a more fitting term for these sitcoms given the absence of genuine fear and horror. Wheatley is careful not to overstate her case here and cautions that, for all their programme's satirizing of traditional US family sitcoms such as *Father Knows Best* (1954–63), Gomez and Morticia Addams 'share an almost naïve desire to be good citizens', and thus the gothic family sitcom ultimately offers 'a rather conservative vision of suburbia' (p. 145).

Although Wheatley acknowledges that *Gothic Television* does not attempt to cover or mention every example of gothic programming, she does, nonetheless, provide a provisional 'canon' of shows one would expect to see in any discussion of the gothic on television. Canon-forming is always contentious and although I would not disagree with any of Wheatley's choices for inclusion on this list, I would suggest some important additions. The emphasis on the 1960s and 1970s (in terms of British gothic television) is understandable – there is no doubt about the 'downward trend', as Wheatley puts it (p. 87), and declining fortunes of British gothic programming, and non-mimetic drama (or telefantasy) in general, over the course of the 1980s and early 1990s (by which point telefantasy tended to be placed in designated cult slots – or cult 'reservations' as they felt at the time – rather than receiving regular primetime and mainstream exposure). In spite of this decline, however, the 1980s and early 1990s were not without significant entries for anyone compiling a list of gothic television.

Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, the gothic spirit found regular succour in children's television of this era, with vivid examples including Robert Stephens's diabolical Abner Brown summoning demons in the catacombs beneath a theological college in *The Box of Delights* (1984) – a scene far darker (thanks, in part, to evocative lighting, the design of the [animated] demons, Stephens's malevolence and Roger Limb's chilling radiophonic music) than the corresponding scene in John Masefield's far jollier original book from 1935. Wheatley draws attention to the often

1 David Marc, *Comic Visions: Television Comedy and American Culture*, second edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

haunting examples of gothic children's drama, particularly those produced by Paul Stone for the BBC, culminating with the excellent *Moondial* (1988). Further work into the gothic in children's television would be welcome, not least in terms of contributing to Wheatley's stated hope of expanding the academic discussion of television programming beyond its 'relatively tiny' scope and emphasis on 'a small number of texts to which scholars of television return time and again' (p. 1) – a small number from which children's drama has, disappointingly, all too often been excluded.

One of the most prominent havens of the gothic on television throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, not included in Wheatley's list (although it does receive a generous footnote), was Granada television's series of Sherlock Holmes adventures starring Jeremy Brett (1984–94). Holmes, the champion of deductive reasoning and meticulous analysis, might appear to be the enemy of the supernatural, but for much of the 1980s and early 1990s these dramatizations were one of the few regular sources of gothic sensibility on British television. Indeed, as the series progressed, the tone of many of the episodes openly embraced the gothic (with episodes such as 'The Crooked Man' [1984] and, more famously, 'The Hound of the Baskervilles' [1988]) in ways that suggest they could easily be accommodated within Wheatley's study. Brett's 'theatrical' and increasingly flamboyant performance as Holmes corresponds with Wheatley's account of Denholm Elliott's interpretation of Dracula in a 1968 instalment of *Mystery and Imagination*. For Wheatley, Elliott's performance draws on established codes of gothic stage acting 'which defy television drama's tendency towards naturalism, seen in expansive arm gestures and typically "vampirous" body movements, whereby the actor's body becomes entirely gestural' (p. 60) and there is a similar array of melodramatic exaggeration in Brett's dynamic performance as Holmes (heightened further by the contrast with the more muted stoicism of the two actors who played alongside Brett as Watson, David Burke and Edward Hardwicke).

By the time we reach 'The Last Vampyre' and 'The Eligible Bachelor' in 1993, with Holmes haunted by the death of his nemesis and visions of animal-women wrapped in cobwebs, we are in pure gothic territory. Indeed, 'The Eligible Bachelor' would sit comfortably within Wheatley's already impressive chapter on the female gothic in British television adaptations from the 1980s to the millennium, such as *Northanger Abbey* (1987), *The Woman in White* (1997) and *The Wyvern Mystery* (2000). With a decaying stately country mansion doubling as a private zoo, a duplicitous society gentleman deceiving a series of beautiful women into marriage, a former wife chained and living as a savage in a garden dungeon and the most recent bride stalked by a leopard through the mansion's corridors, the requisite semantic elements are present and correct. It is again important to stress that Wheatley makes it clear it is not her aim to cover every example of gothic

television, but if I have a slight concern it is that a less-than-thorough reading of the book might create the impression that, given the cancellation of the recurring gothic anthology series that flourished in the 1970s, there was an absence of relevant programming in the 1980s and 1990s. The potential consequence of the book's particular emphases means that without a deeper interrogation of the reasons for gothic programming's decline in the 1980s, there is an unintentional nurturing of notions of a 'golden age' of British television in the 1960s and 1970s. If Wheatley excels in her account of the origins of British gothic television through the use of archival material, an equally thorough analysis of its decline in the 1980s (and partial return in the late 1990s through programmes such as *Ultraviolet* [1998]), perhaps including interviews with relevant personnel, would be a welcome expansion to the book.

These minor concerns aside, this is an intelligent and thoughtful book with several impressive case studies and a refreshing openness towards the gothic that allows Wheatley to explore both the expected and the unexpected. Identifying key developments in the small-screen gothic, Wheatley has provided a strong foundation and case for further work on these often rewarding and distinctive programmes. The Munsters may well be the neighbours from hell but, on the evidence of this book, they have more than earned the right to reside in the same district as Prince Manfred and the offspring of Otranto.

Contributors

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Notes to Contributors

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Style for citations of *written sources* is as follows:

1. Christian Metz, *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: the Imaginary Signifier*, trans. Celia Britton. Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster and Alfred Guzzetti (London: Macmillan, 1982).

2. Ginette Vincendeau, 'Melodramatic realism: on some French women's films in the 1930s', *Screen*, vol. 30, no. 3 (1989), pp. 51–65.

3. Monika Treut, 'Female misbehaviour', in Laura Pietrapaolo and Ada Testaferri (eds), *Feminisms in the Cinema* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 106–21.

References to *films* in both notes and main text should include full title with initial capitalisation according to accepted style of the language concerned. Titles should be italicised, and in the case of non-English language films original release title should precede US and/or British release title, followed by director and release date in round brackets:

A bout de souffle/Breathless (Jean-Luc Godard, 1960)

Where such information is relevant to the argument and does not appear elsewhere in the text, details of production company and/or country of origin may also be included:

The Big Sleep (Howard Hawks, Warner Bros, US, 1945)

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Where the Difference Begins (w. David Mercer, BBC, 1961)

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